Every man will go with thee and be thy guide
In thy most need to go by thy side

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·THEE,
&·BE·THY·GVIDE
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Sermons on religion and life

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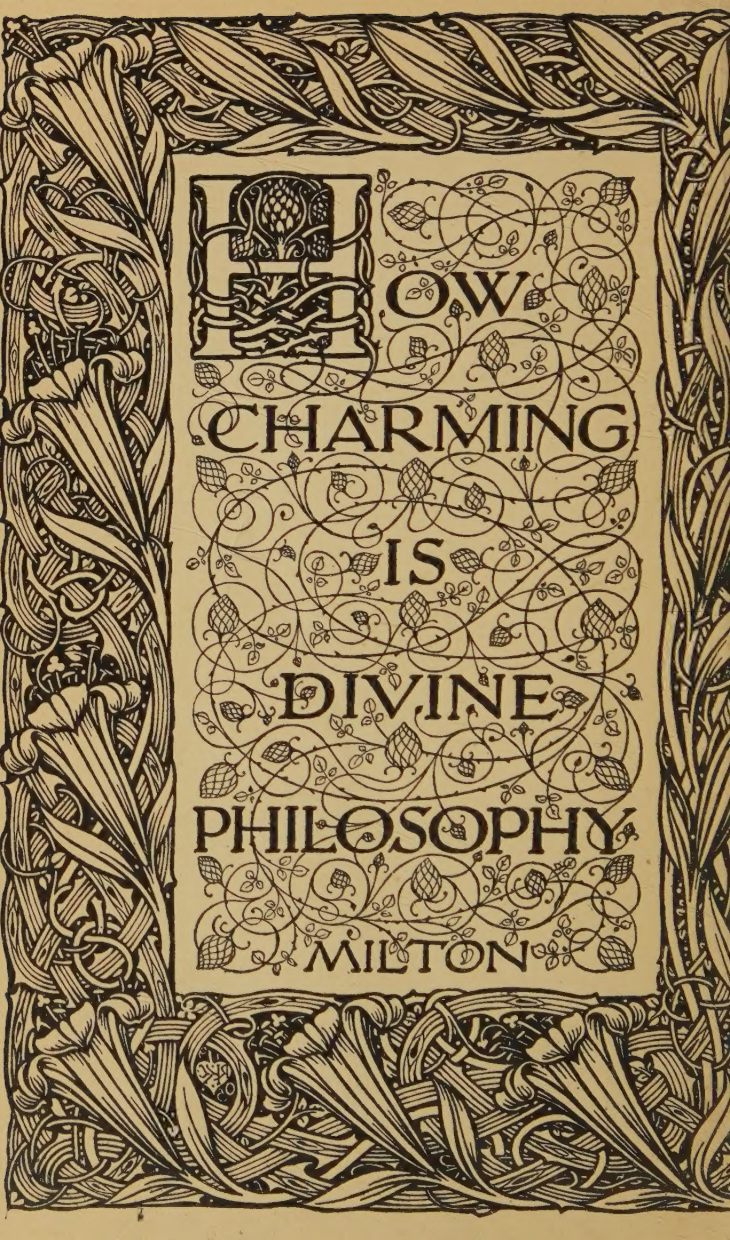
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SERMONS ON RELIGION & LIFE BY FREDERICK W ROBERTSON

LONDON: PUBLISHED
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COMMENDATION

ROBERTSON'S sermons have stood the test of fifty years' use, they have gone through as many editions as a popular novel, they have been the frequent companions of men and women who are not generally found among sermon readers, and they are to-day nearly as modern and as fresh as on the day they were first spoken.

It is a pleasant task to be called on to commend them in a more companionable form than that in which they have hitherto appeared. This book may easily find a corner in the pocket or luggage of busy people, and whether it be taken up in the quiet of the morning or the evening, or whether it be made the companion of a journey, its thoughts and its words seem to be just those most calculated to inspire and comfort the generation now occupying the world's stage.

The members of this generation, like that to which Robertson spoke, are conscious of coming changes. Old things are passing away and new things are not revealed. This generation has, however, its own characteristics. The scientific spirit has left its mark even where there is no scientific knowledge. The workman as well as the philosopher seems determined to be true to what is within the reach of test and experience, and the truth is sometimes expressed at the cost of brutal roughness towards established and traditional conventions. But the people who are thus scientifically minded show also evident signs of being spiritually minded. There is a widely spread consciousness of the presence of the Unknown, an expectation of some one or something great about to appear—the recognition of unseen forces

surrounding life, even when such recognition leads on to what may be called superstition. The people of to-day more and more give up church-going and buy more books about religion. They commit themselves to no belief and are tolerant of every belief. They leave off poetry reading and turn towards nature study. They give up the Bible and become interested in Christian science. The young men refuse to take orders and are keen to save souls.

There is, it may be said, among all classes of society, a growing dislike of insincerity, a dread of seeming to be committed to any "ism"—a shrinking from being called good, a shyness of party domination, and a respect for honesty of thought, wherever such honesty may ultimately lead. There is, at the same time, a strange desire for spiritual guidance—a sense of something present in the world of to-day like that which gave to former generations their force or their peace, and a demand for association on some higher plane than that which is offered by parties, or even by societies, whose object is mutual benefit or other service. Human nature seems to need to look up for its strength as well as to look down and around.

These characteristics of the present generation may perhaps be traceable only in the words and acts of the few, but their effects are to be found also among the masses of the people, whose words and acts may perhaps have to be read backwards. The wild pursuit of pleasure, for instance, is probably a rebound from the difficulty which the problem of life now offers. The people have realized that they can find no security on the old foundations, they cannot any longer give unquestioning obedience to old laws or traditions, they will not trouble themselves to doubt or to inquire, and they seek to drown care in excitement. In the same way, to take another instance, party zeal—the keen devotion to sectarian claims—and the importance attached to shows and "big" schemes are perhaps the evidences of that doubt about party and of that desire for a vision which are put into words by the more educated members of society. The braver minds throw off the clothes whose use is doubted, the more timid cling to them with greater tenacity: the doubt and

the desire account for both actions. The characteristics of the present generation may then be summed up as (1) a determination to be true or real at the cost of many conceptions which once controlled conduct, and (2) a growing spiritual consciousness which is waiting for a new revelation.

Robertson's sermons seem specially fitted to the needs of such a generation. They are so evidently wrought out of his own personal experience. He testifies to what he himself has seen or known. The readers of these sermons are thus to be found in all classes of society and in all countries. The head of a large Japanese college told me how it was his practice to read to the students one of Robertson's sermons. "Ian Maclaren," in an introduction to a former edition, has the following passage —"A sermon of Robertson's was read when a ship's company were in danger of death, a volume went through the American War in an officer's knapsack. Dean Stanley meets a French military surgeon—a revolutionary and an unbeliever—who is deeply interested in Robertson, and next day an eminent official and a devout Catholic questions the Dean about "an extraordinary preacher whose name was Frederick Robertson." Europeans, Asiatics, Catholics and Protestants, Churchmen and Nonconformists, believers and sceptics, have all alike found help, because all have been able to say, "Here is a man who knows what is in man."

Robertson recognises something deeper than "scoffing" in Pilate's question, "What is truth?" Every thought he expresses is firmly based on an experience which every reader may test by looking into his own mind and heart. Every conclusion has taken due notice of conclusions reached by human experience, and is fitted into a world where there are classes of society, where science has discovered laws, and trade made new manners. If he speaks of "sin" it is in language every reader recognises as true, if he talks about Sabbath keeping it is with due recognition of what life in a society demands. There is nothing imported or curtailed so that it may be fitted into some scheme or system, there is not a word added for rhetorical effect, and where references are made to Bible tales

whose authority criticism may have affected, or to Bible authors whose position is no longer admitted, his teaching, based on something deeper than the letter of the Bible, remains unshaken. People weary of unreality find in Robertson a mind which is sure without being insincere, forcible without being partisan, which is brave as well as tender, strong as well as humble.

The sermons seem therefore specially fitted for a generation determined on truth, while they at the same time give expression to the faith after which it is groping.

Faith comes from faith as life comes from life. The man who walks as seeing the invisible opens other men's eyes for a like vision. Robertson walks through a real world, he has to do with society, with labour and capital, with doubts, with sorrow and failure, but he deals with everything as one who himself knows the whole of which everything is a part. He takes, for instance, the natural human desire for rest. He, by examples which appeal to every one's experience, shows what sort of rest satisfies and what does not satisfy. He gives due recognition to the other human desires—to the desire for action and the desire for fame, which seem to war with the desire for rest. Then, out of the very facts of human nature, he brings, as it were, the present God. His readers are not forced by argument, they feel in themselves that as they become like God they will find rest.

Robertson's faith often lights up some duty or some course of conduct which wisdom, or even prudence born of the time, may have suggested. It shows God's will to be behind common morality and good business and wise methods of poor relief. He puts men on the firm ground which their own experience has tested, and then he shows the air to be full of the hosts of God ranged on their side. He brings religion to bear on life. He makes some Bible tale which at first sight seems to be concerned only with the coarse passions or barbaric manners of a past age to ring with teaching applicable to modern times. His faith has discovered the spirit behind the letter, and revealed the inspiration of humanity which has been from the beginning and still is. He takes some doctrine hidden in time garments

which are stiff and heavy with commentaries and expositions, and he brings out a meaning, true always, in all places and for all men.

Earnest churchmen and earnest nonconformists, the orthodox as well as the unorthodox, may thus read the sermons with profit. They may at times be compelled to say that they are unable to adopt his position. But they will rarely feel irritated by any unfair statement of that position, or by any assumption of superiority, and they will easily forgive any misunderstanding due to ignorance, as they recognise his appreciation of the truth for which they stand. They may continue in their old professions—Robertson was no maker of proselytes—but from contact with his large mind, so permeated by faith, they will be conscious of wider sympathies, of a larger generosity, and of a surer hold on truth.

This book—so attractive and so convenient—is thus commended to his fellow-travellers in the world by one who has found the sermons to be among his best companions in a life which has been much absorbed in doing.

The original four volumes have been broken up and made into three. There was nothing in the former arrangement by which any particular sermon gained, and there is perhaps some gain in grouping them together in special groups. These groups cannot claim to be exclusive. There are sermons on life which are also sermons on doctrine, and there are many sermons on Bible subjects which bear directly on life. The groups, however, do give some clue to the thought or the structure of the various sermons, and may serve to attract readers whose particular interest may be Life, or Doctrine, or The Bible.

SAMUEL A. BARNETT.

The following is a list of the works of F. W. Robertson :—

Address delivered at Opening of Working Men's Institute, Brighton, 1849; Two Lectures on the Influence of Poetry on the Working Classes, 1852; Lectures and Addresses on Literary and Social Topics, 1858; Translation of Lessing's "Education of the Human Race," 1858; Expository Lectures on St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, 1859; Analysis of "In Memoriam," 1862; Sermons preached at Trinity Chapel, Brighton, 4 series, 1855–63; 5th series, 1890; Letters (with Life), ed. S. A. Brooke, 1865; A Few Extracts from the Early Poetical Works of F. W. R., 1870 (?), privately printed; Literary Remains (including Lectures, Addresses, and other Writings), 1876.

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SERMONS ON RELIGION AND LIFE

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH TO MEN OF WEALTH

1 Sam. xxv. 10, 11.—"And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

I have selected this passage for our subject this evening, because it is one of the earliest cases recorded in the Bible in which the interests of the employer and the employed, the man of wealth and the man of work, stood, or seemed to stand, in antagonism to each other.

It was a period in which an old system of things was breaking up; and the new one was not yet established. The patriarchal relationship of tutelage and dependence was gone, and monarchy was not yet in firm existence. Saul was on the throne; but his rule was irregular and disputed. Many things were slowly growing up into custom which had not yet the force of law; and the first steps by which custom passes into law from precedent to precedent are often steps at every one of which struggle and resistance must take place.

The history of the chapter is briefly this. Nabal, the wealthy sheep-master, fed his flocks in the pastures of Carmel. David was leader of a band of men who got their living by the sword on the same hills: outlaws whose

excesses he in some degree restrained, and over whom he retained a leader's influence. A rude irregular honour was not unknown among those fierce men. They honourably abstained from injuring Nabal's flocks. They did more: they protected them from all harm against the marauders of the neighbourhood. By the confession of Nabal's own herdsmen, "they were a wall unto them both by night and day, all the time they were with them keeping their flocks."

And thus a kind of Right grew up: irregular enough, but sufficient to establish a claim on Nabal for remuneration of these services: a new claim, not admitted by him: reckoned by him an exaction, which could be enforced by no law; only by that law which is above all statute-law, deciding according to emergencies; an indefinable instinctive sense of Fairness and Justice. But as there was no law, and each man was to himself a law, and the sole arbiter of his own rights, what help was there but that disputes should rise between the wealthy proprietors and their self-constituted champions, with exaction and tyranny on the one side, churlishness and parsimony on the other? Hence a fruitful and ever-fresh source of struggle: the one class struggling to take as much, and the other to give as little as possible. In modern language, the Rights of Labour were in conflict with the Rights of Property.

The story proceeds thus:—David presented a demand, moderate and courteous enough (v. 6, 7, 8). It was refused by Nabal, and added to the refusal were those insulting taunts of low birth and outcast condition which are worse than injury, and sting, making men's blood run fire. One court of appeal was left. There remained nothing but the trial by Force. "Gird ye on," said David, "every man his sword."

Now, observe the fearful, hopeless character of this struggle. The question had come to this: whether David with his ferocious, needy six hundred mountaineers united by the sense of wrong, or Nabal with his well-fed and trained hirelings bound by interest, not love to his cause,

were stronger? Which was the more powerful, want whetted by insult, or selfishness pampered by abundance; they who wished to keep by force, or they who wished to take? An awful and uncertain spectacle, but the spectacle which is exhibited in every country where Rights are keenly felt and duties lightly—where insolent demand is met by insulting defiance. Wherever classes are held apart by rivalry and selfishness instead of drawn together by the Law of Love—wherever there has not been established a kingdom of heaven, but only a kingdom of the world—there exist the forces of inevitable collision.

I. The causes of this false social state.
II. The message of the Church to the man of wealth.

I. False basis on which social superiority was held to rest.

Throughout, Nabal's conduct was built upon the assumption of his own superiority. He was a man of wealth. David was dependent on his own daily efforts. Was not that enough to settle the question of superiority and inferiority? It was enough on both sides for a long time, till the falsehood of the assumption became palpable and intolerable. But palpable and intolerable it did become at last.

A social falsehood will be borne long, even with considerable inconvenience, until it forces itself obtrusively on men's attention, and can be endured no longer. The exact point at which *this* social falsehood, that wealth constitutes superiority and has a right to the subordination of inferiors, becomes intolerable, varies according to several circumstances.

The evils of poverty are comparative—they depend on climate. In warm climates, where little food, no fuel, and scanty shelter are required, the sting is scarcely felt till poverty becomes starvation. They depend on contrast. Far above the point where poverty becomes actual famine, it may become unbearable if contrasted strongly with the

unnecessary luxury and abundance enjoyed by the classes above. Where all suffer equally, as men and officers suffer in an Arctic voyage, men bear hardship with cheerfulness: but where the suffering weighs heavily on some, and the luxury of enjoyment is out of all proportion monopolised by a few, the point of reaction is reached long before penury has become actual want: or, again, when wealth or rank assumes an insulting domineering character—when contemptuous names for the poor are invented, and current among the more unfeeling of a wealthy class: then the falsehood of superiority can be tolerated no longer; for we do not envy honours which are meekly borne, nor wealth which is unostentatious.

Now it was this which brought matters to a crisis. David had borne poverty long—nay, he and his men had long endured the contrast between their own cavern-homes and beds upon the rock, and Nabal's comforts. But when Nabal added to this those pungent biting sneers, which sink into poor men's hearts and rankle; which are not forgotten, but come out fresh in the day of retribution,—"Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master," then David began to measure himself with Nabal, —not a wiser man—nor a better—nor even a stronger. Who is this Nabal? Intellectually, a fool—morally, a profligate, drowning reason in excess of wine at the annual sheep-shearing. A tyrant over his slaves—over-bearing to men who only ask of him their rights. Then rose the question, which Nabal had better not have forced men to answer for themselves, By what right does this possessor of wealth lord it over men who are inferior in no one particular.

Now observe two things.

1. An apparent inconsistency in David's conduct. David had received injury after injury from Saul, and only forgiven. One injury from Nabal, and David is striding over the hills to revenge his wrong with naked steel. How came this reverence and irreverence to mix together?

We reply. Saul had a claim of Authority on David's allegiance: Nabal only one of rank. Between these the Bible makes a vast difference. It says, The *powers* which be are ordained of God. But upper and lower, as belonging to difference in property, are fictitious terms: true, if character corresponds with titular superiority; false, if it does not. And such was the difference manifested in the life of the Son of God. To lawful authority, whether Roman or Jewish, even priestly, He paid deference: but to the titled mark of conventional distinction, none. Rabbi, Rabbi was no Divine authority. It was not power, a delegated attribute of God: it was only a name. In Saul therefore David reverenced one his superior in authority; but in Nabal he only had one surpassing him in wealth. And David refused, somewhat too rudely, to acknowledge the bad, great man as his superior: would pay him no reverence, respect, or allegiance whatever. Let us mark that distinction well, so often confused—kings, masters, parents: here is a power ordained of God. Honour it. But wealth, name, title, distinctions, always fictitious, often false and vicious, if you claim homage for these, separate from worth, you confound two things essentially different. Try that by the test of His Life. Name the text where Christ claimed reverence for wealth or rank. On the Mount did the Son of Man bow the knee to the majesty of wealth and wrong, or was His Sonship shown in that He would not bow down to that as if of God?

2. This great falsehood, respecting superior and inferior, rested on a truth. There had been a superiority in the wealthy class once. In the patriarchal system wealth and rule had gone together. The father of the family and tribe was the one in whom proprietorship was centred. But the patriarchal system had passed away. Men like Nabal succeeded to the patriarch's wealth, and expected the subordination which had been yielded to patriarchal character and position: and this when every particular of relationship was altered. Once the patriarch was the protector of his dependents. Now David's class was independent, and the

protectors rather than the protected; at all events able to defend themselves. Once the rich man was the ruler in virtue of paternal relationship. Now wealth was severed from rule and relationship: a man might be rich, yet neither a ruler, nor a protector, nor a kinsman. And the fallacy of Nabal's expectation consisted in this, that he demanded for wealth that reverence which had once been due to men who happened to be wealthy.

It is a fallacy in which we are perpetually entangled. We expect reverence for that which was once a symbol of what was reverenced, but is reverenced no longer. Here, in England, it is common to complain that there is no longer any respect of inferiors towards superiors: that servants were once devoted and grateful, tenants submissive, subjects enthusiastically loyal. But we forget that servants were once protected by their masters: and tenants safe from wrong only through the guardianship of their powerful lords: that thence a personal gratitude grew up: that now they are protected by the law from wrong by a different social system altogether: and that the individual bond of gratitude subsists no longer. We expect that to masters and employers the same reverence and devotedness shall be rendered which were due to them under other circumstances, and for different reasons: as if wealth and rank had ever been the claim to reverence, and not merely the accidents and accompaniments of the claim: as if anything less sacred than holy ties could purchase sacred feelings: as if the homage of free manhood could be due to gold and name: as if to the mere Nabal-fool who is labelled as worth so much, and whose signature carries with it so much coin, the holiest and most ennobling sensations of the soul, reverence and loyalty, were due by God's appointment.

No. That patriarchal system has passed for ever. No sentimental wailings for the past, no fond regrets for the virtues of a bygone age, no melancholy, poetical, retrospective antiquarianism can restore it. In church and state the past is past: and you can no more bring back the blind reverence than the rude virtues of those days. The day has

come in which if feudal loyalty or patriarchal reverence are to be commanded, they must be won by patriarchal virtues or feudal real superiorities.

Second: Cause of this unhealthy social state: A false conception respecting Rights.

It would be unjust to Nabal to represent this as an act of wilful oppression and conscious injustice. He did what appeared to him fair between man and man. He paid his labourers. Why should he pay anything beyond stipulated wages?

David's demand appeared an extravagant and insolent one, provoking unfeigned astonishment and indignation. It was an invasion of his rights. It was a dictation with respect to the employment of that which was his own. "Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

Recollect, too, there was something to be said for Nabal. This view of the irresponsible right of property was not *his* invention. It was the view probably entertained by all his class. It had descended to him from his parents. They were prescriptive and admitted rights on which he stood. And however false or unjust a prescriptive right may be, however baseless when examined, there is much excuse for those who have inherited and not invented it; for it is hard to see through the falsehood of any system by which we profit, and which is upheld by general consent, especially when good men, too, uphold it. Rare, indeed, is that pure-heartedness which sees with eagle glance through conventionalisms:—This is a wrong, and I and my own class are the doers of it.

On the other hand, David and his needy followers were not slow to perceive that they had their rights over that property of Nabal's.

Men on whom wrongs press are the first to feel them, and their cries of pain and indignation are the appointed means of God to direct to their wrongs the attention of society.

Very often the fierce and maddened shriek of suffering is the first intimation that a wrong exists at all.

There was no law in Israel to establish David's claims. This guardianship of Nabal's flocks was partly a self-constituted thing. No bargain had been made: no sum of reward expressly stipulated. But there is a Law besides and above all written law, which gives to written laws their authority, and from which, so often as they diverge, it is woe to the framers of the law; for their law must perish, and the Eternal Law unseen will get itself acknowledged as a truth from heaven, or a truth from hell, a truth begirt with fire and sword, if they will not read it except so.

In point of fact, David had a right to a share of Nabal's profits. The harvest was in part David's harvest, for without David it never could have been reaped. The sheep were in part David's sheep, for without David not a sheep would have been spared by the marauders of the hills. Not a sheaf of corn was carried to Nabal's barn: nor a night passed in repose by Nabal's shepherds, but what told of the share of David in the saving of that sheaf, and the procurement of that repose (not the less real because it was past and unseen). The right which the soldier has by law to his pay, was the right which David had by unwritten law; a right resting on the fact that his services were indispensable for the harvest.

Here, then, is one of the earliest instances of the Rights of Labour coming into collision with the Rights of Property: rights shadowy, undefined, perpetually shifting their boundaries, varying with every case, altering with every age, incapable of being adjusted except rudely by law, and leaving always something which the most subtle and elaborate law cannot define, and which in any moment may grow up into a wrong.

Now, when it comes to this, Rights against Rights, there is no determination of the question but by overwhelming numbers or blood. David's remedy was a short, sharp, decisive one. "Gird ye on every man his sword." And it is difficult, for the sake of humanity, to say to which side in

such a quarrel we should wish well. If the rich man succeeds in civil war, he will bind the chain of degradation more severely and more surely for years, or ages, on the crushed serf. If the champions of popular rights succeed by the sword, you may then await, in awe, the reign of tyranny, licentiousness, and lawlessness. For the victory of the lawless, with the memory of past wrongs to avenge, is almost more sanguinary than the victory of those who have had power long, and whose power has been defied.

3. We find another cause in circumstances. Want and unjust exclusion precipitated David and his men into this rebellion. It is common enough to lay too much weight on circumstances. Nothing can be more false than the popular theory that ameliorated outward condition is the panacea for the evils of society. The gospel principle begins from within and works outwards. The world's principle begins with the outward condition, and expects to influence inwardly. To expect that by changing the world without in order to suit the world within, by taking away all difficulties and removing all temptations, instead of hardening the man within against the force of outward temptation—to adapt the lot to the man, instead of moulding the spirit to the lot, is to reverse the gospel method of procedure. Nevertheless, even that favourite speculation of theorists, that perfect circumstances will produce perfect character, contains a truth. Circumstances of outward condition are not the sole efficients in the production of character, but they are efficients which must not be ignored. Favourable condition will not produce excellence: but the want of it often hinders excellence. It is true that vice leads to poverty: all the moralizers tell us that, but it is also true that poverty leads to vice. There are some in this world to whom, speaking humanly, social injustice and social inequalities have made goodness impossible. Take, for instance, the case of these bandits on Mount Carmel. Some of them were outlawed by their own crimes, but others doubtless by debts not wilfully contracted—one at least, David, by a most unjust and unrighteous persecution. And these men, ex-

cluded, needy, exasperated by a sense of wrong, untaught outcasts, could you gravely expect from them obedience, patience, meekness, religious resignation? Yes, my brethren, that is exactly the marvellous impossibility people do most inconsistently expect; and there are no bounds to our astonishment if we do not get what we expect:—Superhuman honesty from starving men, to whom life by hopelessness has become a gambler's desperate chance—chivalrous loyalty and high forbearance from creatures to whom the order of society has presented itself only as an unjust system of partiality. We forget that forbearance and obedience are the very last and highest lessons learned by the spirit in its most careful training. By those unhallowed conventionalisms through which we, like heathens and not like Christians, crush the small offender and court the great one—that damnable cowardice by which we banish the seduced and half admire the seducer—by which, in defiance of all manliness and all generosity, we punish the weak and tempted, and let the tempter go free:—by all these we make men and woman outcasts, and then expect from them the sublimest graces of reverence and resignation.

II. The message of the Church to the man of wealth.

The message of the Church contains those principles of Life which, carried out would, and hereafter will, realize the Divine Order of Society. The revealed Message does not create the facts of our Humanity—it simply makes them known. The Gospel did not make God our Father—it authoritatively reveals that He is so. It did not create a new duty of loving one another—it revealed the old duty which existed from eternity, and must exist as long as humanity is humanity. It was no "new commandment," but an old commandment which had been heard from the beginning. The church of God is that living body of men who are called by Him out of the world, not to be the inventors of a new social system, but to exhibit in the world by word and life, chiefly by life, what humanity is, was, and will be, in the Idea of God. Now so far as the social economy is con-

cerned, the revelations of the church will coincide with the discoveries of a Scientific Political Economy. Political Economy discovers slowly the facts of the immutable laws of social well-being. But the living principles of those laws, which cause them to be obeyed, Christianity has revealed to loving hearts long before. The spirit discovers them to the spirit. For instance, Political Economy, gazing on such a fact as this of civil war, would arrive at the same principles which the church arrives at. She too would say, Not selfishness, but love. Only that she arrives at these principles by experience, not intuition: by terrible lessons, not revelation: by revolutions, wars, and famines, not by spiritual impulses of charity.

And so because these principles were eternally true in humanity, we find in the conduct of Abigail towards David in this early age, not explicitly, but implicitly, the very principles which the Church of Christ has given to the world; and more, the very principles which a sound economy would sanction. In her reply to David we have the anticipation by a loving heart of those duties which selfish prudence must have taught at last.

1. The spiritual dignity of man as man. Recollect David was the poor man, but Abigail, the high-born lady, admits his worth: "The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days." Here is a truth revealed to that age. Nabal's day, and the day of such as Nabal, is past—another power is rising above the horizon. David's cause is God's cause. Worth does not mean what a man is worth—you must find some better definition than that.

Now this is the very truth revealed in the Incarnation. David, Israel's model king; the king by the grace of God, not by the conventional rules of human choice, is a shepherd's son. Christ, the king who is to reign over our regenerated humanity, is humbly born—the poor woman's Son. That is the Church's message to the man of wealth, and a message which it seems has to be learned

afresh in every age. It was new to Nabal. It was new to the men of the age of Christ. In His day they were offended in Him, because He was humbly born. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" It is the offence now. They who retain those superstitious ideas of the eternal superiority of rank and wealth, have the first principles of the Gospel yet to learn. How can they believe in the Son of Mary? They may honour Him with the lip, they deny Him in His brethren. Whoever helps to keep alive that ancient lie of upper and lower, resting the distinction not on official authority or personal worth, but on wealth and title, is doing his part to hinder the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Now the Church of Christ proclaims that truth in baptism. She speaks of a kingdom here in which all are, as spirits, equal. She reveals a Fact. She does not affect to create the fact. She says—not hypothetically, "this child *may* be the child of God if prevenient grace has taken place, or if hereafter he shall have certain feelings and experiences:" nor, "Hereby I create this child magically by supernatural power in one moment, what it was not a moment before:" but she says authoritatively, "I pronounce this child the child of God: the brother of Christ the First-born—the son of Him who has taught us by His Son to call Him *our* Father, not *my* Father. Whatever that child may become hereafter in fact, he is now by right of creation and redemption, the child of God. Rich or poor, titled or untitled, he shares the spiritual nature of the second Adam—the Lord from heaven."

2. The second truth expressed by Abigail was the Law of Sacrifice. She did not heal the grievance with smooth words. Starving men are not to be pacified by professions of good will. She brought her two hundred loaves (v. 18), and her two skins of wine, her five sheep ready dressed, &c. A princely provision!

You might have said this was waste—half would have been enough. But the truth is, liberality is a most real economy. She could not stand there calculating the

smallest possible expense at which the affront might be wiped out. True economy is to pay liberally and fairly for faithful service. The largest charity is the best economy. Nabal had had a faithful servant. He should have counted no expense too great to retain his services, instead of cheapening and depreciating them. But we wrong Abigail if we call this economy or calculation. In fact, had it been done on economical principles, it would have failed. Ten times this sum from Nabal would not have arrested revenge. For Nabal it was too late. Concessions extracted by fear only provoke exaction further. The poor know well what is given because it must be given, and what is conceded from a sense of justice. They *feel* only what is real. David's men and David felt that these were not the gifts of a sordid calculation, but the offerings of a generous heart. And it won them—their gratitude—their enthusiasm—their unfeigned homage.

This is the attractive power of that great Law, whose highest Expression was the Cross. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Say what you will, it is not interest, but the sight of noble qualities, and true sacrifice, which commands the devotion of the world. Yea,—even the bandit and the outcast will bend before that as before a Divine thing. In one form or another it draws all men—it commands all men.

Now this the Church proclaims as part of its special message to the rich. It says that the Divine Death was a Sacrifice. It declares that death to be the law of every life which is to be like His. It says that the Law, which alone can interpret the mystery of life, is the self-sacrifice of Christ. It proclaims the law of His life to have been this: "For their sakes I devote (sanctify) Myself, that they also may be devoted through the Truth." In other words, the Self-sacrifice of the Redeemer was to be the living principle and law of the self-devotion of His people. It asserts that to be the principle which alone can make any human life a true life. "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the

church." We have petrified *that* Sacrifice into a dead theological dogma, about the exact efficacy of which we dispute metaphysically, and charge each other with heresy. That atonement will become a living truth only when we humbly recognise in it the eternal fact that sacrifice is the Law of life. The very mockers at the crucifixion unwittingly declared the principle: "He saved others: Himself He cannot save." Of course—How could He save Himself who had to save others? You can only save others when you have ceased to think of saving your own soul—you can only truly bless when you have done with the pursuit of personal happiness. Did you ever hear of a soldier who saved his country by making it his chief work to secure himself? And was the Captain of our salvation to become the Saviour by contravening that universal law of Sacrifice, or by obeying it?

Brother men, the early Church gave expression to that principle of sacrifice in a very touching way. They had all things in common. "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." They failed, not because they declared that, but because men began to think that the duty of sharing was compulsory. They proclaimed principles which were unnatural, inasmuch as they set aside all personal feelings, which are part of our nature too. They virtually compelled private property to cease, because he who retained private property when all were giving up was degraded, and hence became a hypocrite and liar like Ananias. But let us not lose the truth which they expressed in an exaggerated way: "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." Property is sacred. It is *private* property; if it were not, it could not be sacrificed. If it were to be shared equally by the idle and the industrious, there could be no love in giving. Property is the rich man's own. Nabal is right in saying, My bread—my water—my flesh. But there is a higher Right which says, It is not yours. And that voice speaks to every rich man in one way or another, according as he is selfish or

unselfish: coming as a voice of terror or a voice of blessing. It came to Nabal with a double curse, turning his heart into stone with the vision of the danger and the armed ranks of David's avengers; and laying on David's soul the sin of intended murder. It came to the heart of Abigail with a double blessing: blessing her who gave and him who took. To the spirit of the Cross alone we look as the Remedy for social evils. When the people of this great country, especially the rich, shall have been touched with the spirit of the Cross to a largeness of sacrifice of which they have not dreamed as yet, there will be an atonement between the Rights of Labour and the Rights of Property.

3. The last part of the Church's message to the man of wealth touches the matter of rightful influence.

Very remarkable is the demeanour of David towards Nabal, as contrasted with his demeanour towards Abigail. In the one case, defiance, and a haughty self-assertion of equality—in the other, deference, respect, and the most eloquent benediction. It was not, therefore, against the wealthy class, but against individuals of the class, that the wrath of these men burned.

See, then, the folly and the falsehood of the sentimental regret that there is no longer any reverence felt towards superiors. There *is* reverence to superiors, if only it can be shown that they are superiors. Reverence is deeply rooted in the heart of humanity—you cannot tear it out. Civilization—science—progress—only change its direction: they do not weaken its force. If it no longer bows before crucifixes and candles, priests and relics, it is not extinguished towards what is truly sacred and what is priestly in man. The fiercest revolt against false authority is only a step towards submission to rightful authority. Emancipation from false lords only sets the heart free to honour true ones. The free-born David will not do homage to Nabal. Well, now go and mourn over the degenerate age which no longer feels respect for that which is above it. But behold—David has found a something nobler than himself. Feminine charity—sacrifice and justice—and in

gratitude and profoundest respect he bows to that. The state of society which is coming is not one of protection and dependence: nor one of mysterious authority, and blind obedience to it—nor one in which any class shall be privileged by Divine right and another remain in perpetual tutelage; but it is one in which unselfish services and personal qualities will command, by Divine right, gratitude and admiration, and secure a true and spiritual leadership.

Oh! let not the rich misread the signs of the times, or mistake their brethren: they have less and less respect for titles and riches: for vestments and ecclesiastical pretensions: but they have a real respect for superior knowledge and superior goodness: they listen like children to those whom they believe to know a subject better than themselves. Let those who know it say, whether there is not something inexpressibly touching and even humbling in the large, hearty, manly, English reverence and love which the working men show towards those who love and serve them truly, and save them from themselves and from doing wrong. See how David's feelings gush forth (v. 33)—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

The rich and the great may have that love if they will.

To conclude. Doubtless, David was wrong: he had no right even to redress wrongs thus: patience was his divinely appointed duty; and doubtless in such circumstances we should be very ready to preach submission and to blame David. Alas! we, the clergy of the Church of England, have been only too ready to do this: for three long centuries we have taught submission to the powers that be, as if that were the only text in Scripture bearing on the relations between the ruler and the ruled. Rarely have we dared to demand of the powers that be, justice; of the wealthy man and the titled, duties. We have produced folios of slavish flattery upon the Divine Right of Power. Shame on us! we have not denounced the wrongs done to

weakness: and yet for one text in the Bible which requires submission and patience from the poor, you will find a hundred which denounce the vices of the rich—in the writings of the noble old Jewish prophets, that, and almost that only—that in the Old Testament, with a deep roll of words that sounds like Sinai thunders:—and that in the New Testament in words less impassioned and more calmly terrible from the apostles and their Master:—and woe to us in the great day of God, if we have been the sycophants of the rich, instead of the Redressers of the poor man's wrongs: woe to us if we have been tutoring David into respect to his superior, Nabal, and forgotten that David's cause, not Nabal's, is the cause of God.

CHRIST'S JUDGMENT RESPECTING INHERITANCE

LUKE xii. 13–15.—"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

THE Son of God was misunderstood and misinterpreted in His day. With this fact we are familiar; but we are not at all familiar with the consideration that it was very natural that He should be so mistaken.

He went about Galilee and Judea proclaiming the downfall of every injustice, the exposure and confutation of every lie. He denounced the lawyers who refused education to the people in order that they might retain the key of knowledge in their own hands. He reiterated Woe! woe! woe! to the Scribes and Pharisees, who revered the Past, and systematically persecuted every new prophet and every

brave man who rose up to vindicate the Spirit of the Past against the *institutions* of the past. He spoke parables which bore hard on the men of wealth. That, for instance, of the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: who died, and in hell lift up his eyes, being in torments. That of the wealthy proprietor who prospered in the world; who pulled down his barns to build greater; who all the while was in the sight of God a fool; who in front of judgment and eternity was found unready. He stripped the so-called religious party of that day of their respectability, convicted them, to their own astonishment, of hypocrisy, and called them "whited sepulchres." He said God was against them: that Jerusalem's day was come, and that she must fall.

And now consider candidly:—suppose that all this had taken place in this country; that an unknown stranger, with no ordination, with no visible authority, basing his authority upon his truth, and his agreement with the mind of God the Father, had appeared in this England, uttering half the severe things He spoke against the selfishness of wealth, against ecclesiastical authorities, against the clergy, against the popular religious party: suppose that such an one should say that our whole social life is corrupt and false—suppose that instead of "thou blind Pharisee," the word had been "thou blind Churchman!"

Should *we* have fallen at the feet of such an one, and said, Lo! this is a message from Almighty God, and He who brings it is a Son of God; perhaps what He says Himself, His only Son—God—of God?

Or should we not have rather said, This is dangerous teaching, and revolutionary in its tendencies, and He who teaches it is an incendiary, a mad, democratical, dangerous fanatic?

That was exactly what they did say of your Redeemer in His day; nor does it seem at all wonderful that they did.

The sober, respectable inhabitants of Jerusalem, very comfortable themselves, and utterly unable to conceive why things should not go on as they had been going on for a

hundred years—not smarting from the misery and the moral degradation of the lazars with whom He associated, and under whose burdens His loving spirit groaned—thought it excessively dangerous to risk the subversion of their quiet enjoyment by such outcries. They said, prudent men! if He is permitted to go on this way, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation. The Priests and Pharisees, against whom He had spoken specially, were fiercer still. They felt there was no time to be lost.

But still more, His own friends and followers misunderstood Him.

They heard Him speak of a Kingdom of Justice and Righteousness in which every man should receive the due reward of his deeds. They heard Him say that this kingdom was not far off, but actually among them, hindered only by their sins and dulness from immediate appearance. Men's souls were stirred and agitated. They were ripe for anything, and any spark would have produced explosion. They thought the next call would be to take the matter into their own hands.

Accordingly, on one occasion, St. John and St. James asked permission to call down fire from heaven upon a village of the Samaritans which would not receive their message. On another occasion, on a single figurative mention of a sword, they began to gird themselves for the struggle: "Lord," said one, "behold here are two swords." Again, as soon as He entered Jerusalem for the last time, the populace heralded His way with shouts, thinking that the long-delayed hour of retribution was come at last. They saw the Conqueror before them who was to vindicate their wrongs. In imagination they already felt their feet upon the necks of their enemies.

And because their hopes were disappointed, and He was not the Demagogue they wanted, therefore they turned against Him. Not the Pharisees, but the people whom He had come to save, the outcast, and the publican, and the slave, and the maid-servant; they whose cause He had so often pleaded, and whose emancipation He had

prepared. It was the *People* who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

This will become intelligible to us if we can get at the spirit of this passage.

Among those who heard Him lay down the laws of the Kingdom of God,—Justice, Fairness, Charity, there was one who had been defrauded, as it seems, by his brother, of his just share of the patrimony. He thought that the One who stood before him was exactly what he wanted:—A redresser of wrongs—a champion of the oppressed—a divider and arbiter between factions—a referee of lawsuits—one who would spend His life in the unerring decision of all misunderstandings.

To his astonishment the Son of Man refused to interfere in his quarrel, or take part in it at all. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider between you?"

We ask attention to two things.

I. The Saviour's refusal to interfere.

II. The source to which He traced the appeal for interference.

I. The Saviour's refusal to interfere.

1. He implied that it was not His *part* to interfere. "Who made me a Judge or a Divider?"

It is a common saying that religion has nothing to do with politics, and particularly there is a strong feeling current against all interference with politics by the ministers of religion. This notion rests on a basis which is partly wrong, partly right.

To say that religion has nothing to do with politics is to assert that which is simply false. It were as wise to say that the atmosphere has nothing to do with the principles of architecture. Directly, nothing—indirectly, much. Some kinds of stone are so friable, that though they will last for centuries in a dry climate, they will crumble away in a few years in a damp one. There are some temperatures in which a form of building is indispensable which in another

would be unbearable. The shape of doors, windows, apartments, all depend upon the air that is to be admitted or excluded. Nay, it is for the very sake of procuring a habitable atmosphere within certain limits that architecture exists at all. The atmospheric laws are distinct from the laws of architecture; but there is not an architectural question into which atmospheric considerations do not enter as conditions of the question.

That which the air is to architecture, religion is to politics. It is the vital air of every question. Directly, it determines nothing—indirectly, it conditions every problem that can arise. The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. How, if His Spirit is not to mingle with political and social truths?

Nevertheless, in the popular idea that religion as such must not be mixed with politics, there is a profound truth. Here, for instance, the Saviour will not meddle with the question. He stands aloof, sublime and dignified. It was no part of His to take from the oppressor and give to the oppressed, much less to encourage the oppressed to take from the oppressor himself. It was His part to forbid oppression. It was a Judge's part to decide what oppression was. It was not His office to determine the boundaries of civil right, nor to lay down the rules of the descent of property. Of course there was a spiritual and moral principle involved in this question. But He would not suffer His sublime mission to degenerate into the mere task of deciding casuistry.

He asserted principles of love, unselfishness, order, which would decide all questions: but the questions themselves He would not decide. He would lay down the great political principle, "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." But He would not determine whether this particular tax was due to Cæsar or not.

So, too, He would say, Justice, like Mercy and Truth, is one of the weightier matters of the law: but He would not

decide whether in this definite case this or that brother had justice on his side. It was for themselves to determine that, and in that determination lay their responsibility.

And thus religion deals with men, not cases: with human hearts, not casuistry.

Christianity determines general principles, out of which, no doubt, the best government would surely spring: but what the best government is it does not determine—whether Monarchy or a Republic, an Aristocracy or a Democracy.

It lays down a great social law; "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." But it is not its part to declare how much is just and equal. It has no fixed scale of wages according to which masters must give. *That* it leaves to each master and each age of society.

It binds up men in a holy brotherhood. But what are the best institutions and surest means for arriving at this brotherhood it has not said. In particular, it has not pronounced whether competition or co-operation will secure it.

And hence it comes to pass that Christianity is the Eternal Religion, which can never become obsolete. If it sets itself to determine the temporary and the local, the justice of this tax, or the exact wrongs of that conventional maxim, it would soon become obsolete:—it would be the religion of one century, not of all. As it is, it commits itself to nothing except eternal principles.

It is not sent into this world to establish monarchy, or secure the franchise: to establish socialism, or to frown it into annihilation: but to establish a Charity, and a Moderation, and a sense of Duty, and a love of Right, which will modify human life according to any circumstances that can possibly arise.

2. In this refusal, again, it was implied that His kingdom was one founded on Spiritual disposition, not one of outward Law and Jurisprudence.

That this lawsuit should have been decided by the brothers themselves, in love, with mutual fairness, would have been much: that it should be determined by authoritative arbitra-

tion, was, spiritually speaking, nothing. The right disposition of their hearts, and the right division of their property thence resulting, was Christ's kingdom. The apportionment of their property by another's division had nothing to do with His kingdom.

Suppose that both were wrong: one oppressive, the other covetous. Then, that the oppressor should become generous, and the covetous liberal, were a great gain. But to take from one selfish brother in order to give to another selfish brother, what spiritual gain would there have been in this?

Suppose, again, that the retainer of the inheritance was in the wrong, and that the petitioner had justice on his side —that he was a humble, meek man, and his petition only one of right. Well, to take the property from the unjust and give it to Christ's servant, might be, and was, the duty of a Judge. But it was not Christ's part, nor any gain to the cause of Christ. He does not reward His servants with inheritances, with lands, houses, gold. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Christ triumphs by wrongs meekly borne, even more than by wrongs legally righted. What we call poetical justice is not His kingdom.

To apply this to the question of the day. The great problem which lies before Europe for solution is, or will be this: Whether the present possessors of the soil have an exclusive right to do what they will with their own, or whether a larger claim may be put in by the workman for a share in the profits? Whether Capital has hitherto given to Labour its just part, or not? Labour is at present making an appeal, like that of this petitioner, to the Church, to the Bible, to God. "Master, speak unto my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."

Now in the *mere* setting of that question to rest, Christianity is not interested. That landlords should become more liberal, and employers more merciful: that tenants should be more honourable, and workmen more unselfish; that would be indeed a glorious thing—a triumph of Christ's

cause; and any arrangement of the inheritance *thence* resulting would be a real coming of the Kingdom of God. But whether the soil of the country and its capital shall remain the property of the rich, or become more available for the poor,—the rich and the poor remaining as selfish as before,—whether the selfish rich shall be able to keep, or the selfish poor to take, is a matter, religiously speaking, of profound indifference. Which of the brothers shall have the inheritance, the monopolist or the covetous? Either—neither—who cares? Fifty years hence what will it matter? But a hundred thousand years hence it *will* matter whether they settled the question by mutual generosity and forbearance.

3. I remark a third thing. He refused to be the friend of one, because He was the friend of both. He never was the champion of a class, because He was the champion of Humanity.

We may take for granted that the petitioner was an injured man—one at all events who thought himself injured: and Christ had often taught the spirit which would have made his brother right him: but He refused to take his part against his brother, just because he *was* his brother, Christ's servant, and one of God's family, as well as he.

And this was His spirit always. The Pharisees thought to commit Him to a side when they asked whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not. But He would take no side as the Christ: neither the part of the government against the tax-payers; nor the part of the tax-payers against the government.

Now it is a common thing to hear of the rights of man; a glorious and a true saying: but, as commonly used, the expression only means the rights of a section or class of men. And it is very worthy of remark, that in these social quarrels both sides appeal to Christ and to the Bible as the champions of their rights, precisely in the same way in which this man appealed to Him. One class appeal to the Bible, as if it were the great Arbiter which decrees that the poor shall be humble and the subject submissive: and the other

class appeal to the same Book triumphantly, as if it were exclusively on their side, its peculiar blessedness consisting in this, that it commands the rich to divide the inheritance, and the ruler to impose nothing that is unjust.

In either of these cases Christianity is degraded, and the Bible misused. They are not, as they have been made, O shame! for centuries, the servile defenders of Rank and Wealth, nor are they the pliant advocates of discontent and rebellion.

The Bible takes neither the part of the poor against the rich exclusively, nor that of the rich against the poor: and this because it proclaims a real, deep, true, and not a revolutionary brotherhood.

The brotherhood of which we hear so much is often only a one-sided brotherhood. It demands that the rich shall treat the poor as brothers. It has a right to do so. It is a brave and a just demand: but it forgets that the obligation is mutual; that in spite of his many faults, the rich man is the poor man's brother, and that the poor man is bound to recognise him and feel for him as a brother.

It requires that every candid allowance shall be made for the vices of the poorer classes, in virtue of the circumstances which, so to speak, seem to make such vices inevitable: for their harlotry, their drunkenness, their uncleanness, their insubordination. Let it enforce that demand: it may and must do it in the name of Christ. He was mercifully and mournfully gentle to those who through terrible temptation and social injustice had sunk; and sunk into misery at least as much as into sin. But, then, let it not be forgotten that some sympathy must be also due on the same score of circumstances to the rich man. Wealth has its temptations: so has power. The vices of the rich are his forgetfulness of responsibility, his indolence, his extravagance, his ignorance of wretchedness. These must be looked upon, not certainly with weak excuses, but with a brother's eye by the poor man, if he will assert a brotherhood. It is not just to attribute all to circumstances in the one case, and nothing in the other. It is not brotherhood to say that the labourer

does wrong because he is tempted ; and the man of wealth because he is intrinsically bad.

II. The Source to which He traced this appeal for a division.

Now it is almost certain that the reflection which arose to the lips of Christ is not the one which would have presented itself to us under similar circumstances. We should probably have sneered at the state of the law in which a lawsuit could obtain no prompt decision, and injury get no redress : Or we should have remarked upon the evils of the system of primogeniture, and asked whether it were just that one brother should have all, and the others none : Or we might, perhaps, have denounced the injustice of permitting privileged classes at all.

He did nothing of this kind : He did not sneer at the law, nor inveigh against the system, nor denounce the privileged classes. He went deeper : to the very root of the matter. "Take heed and beware of covetousness." It was covetousness which caused the unjust brother to withhold : it was covetousness which made the defrauded brother indignantly complain to a stranger. It is covetousness which is at the bottom of all lawsuits, all social grievances, all political factions. So St. James traces the genealogy. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts which reign in your flesh?"

Covetousness : the covetousness of all. Of the oppressed as well as of the oppressor ; for the cry "Divide" has its root in covetousness just as truly as "I will not." There are no innocent classes : no devils who oppress, and angels who are oppressed. The guilt of a false social state must be equally divided.

We will consider somewhat more deeply this covetousness. In the original the word is a very expressive one. It means the desire of having more—not of having more because there is not enough ; but simply a craving after more. More when a man has not enough. More when

he has. More, More, ever More. Give. Give. Divide. Divide.

This craving is not universal. Individuals and whole nations are without it. There are some nations, the condition of whose further civilisation is, that the desire of accumulation be increased. They are too indolent or too unambitious to be covetous. Energy is awakened when wants are immediate, pressing, present; but ceases with the gratification.

There are other nations in which the craving is excessive, even to disease. Pre-eminent among these is England. This desire of accumulation is the source of all our greatness and all our baseness. It is at once our glory and our shame. It is the cause of our commerce, of our navy, of our military triumphs, of our enormous wealth, and our marvellous inventions. And it is the cause of our factions and animosities, of our squalid pauperism, and the worse than heathen degradation of the masses of our population.

That which makes this the more marvellous is, that of all the nations on the earth, none are so incapable of enjoyment as we. God has not given to us that delicate development which He has given to other races. Our sense of harmony is dull and rare, our perception of beauty is not keen. An English holiday is rude and boisterous: if protracted, it ends in ennui and self-dissatisfaction. We cannot enjoy. Work, the law of human nature, is the very need of an English nature. That cold shade of Puritanism which passed over us, sullenly eclipsing all grace and enjoyment, was but the shadow of our own melancholy, unenjoying, national character.

And yet, we go on accumulating as if we could enjoy more by having more. To quit the class in which they are and rise into that above, is the yearly, daily, hourly effort of millions in this land. And this were well if this word "above" implied a reality: if it meant higher intellectually, morally, or even physically. But the truth is, it is only higher fictitiously. The middle classes already have every

real enjoyment which the wealthiest can have. The only thing they have not is the ostentation of the means of enjoyment. More would enable them to multiply equipages, houses, books. It could not enable them to enjoy them more.

Thus, then, we have reached the root of the matter. Our national craving is, in the proper meaning of the term, covetousness. Not the desire of enjoying more, but the desire of having more.

And if there be a country, a society, a people, to whom this warning is specially applicable, that country is England, that society our own, that people are we. "Take heed and beware of covetousness."

The true remedy for this covetousness He then proceeds to give. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses."

Now, observe the distinction between His view and the world's view of humanity. To the question, What is a man worth? the world replies by enumerating what he has. In reply to the same question, the Son of Man replies by estimating what he is. Not what he has, but what he is, *that*, through time and through eternity, is his real and proper life. He declared the presence of the soul: He announced the dignity of the spiritual man: He revealed the being that we are. Not that which is supported by meat and drink, but that whose very life is in Truth, Integrity, Honour, Purity. "Skin for skin" was the satanic version of this matter; "All that a man hath will he give for his *life*." "What shall it profit a man," was the Saviour's announcement, "if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own *soul?*"

For the oppressed and the defrauded this was the true consolation and compensation. The true consolation. This man had lost so much loss. Well; how is he consoled? By the thought of retaliation? By the promise of revenge? By the assurance that he shall have what he ought by right to have? Nay, but thus—*as it were:* Thou hast lost so much, but thyself remains. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesses."

Most assuredly Christianity proclaims laws which will eventually give to each man his rights. I do not deny this. But I say that the hope of these rights is not the message, nor the promise, nor the consolation of Christianity. Rather they consist in the assertion of the true Life, instead of all other hopes: of the substitution of blessedness which is inward character, for happiness which is outward satisfaction of desire. For the broken-hearted, the peace which the world cannot give. For the poor, the life which destitution cannot take away. For the persecuted, the thought that they are the children of their Father which is in Heaven.

A very striking instance of this is found in the consolation offered by St. Paul to slaves. How did he reconcile them to their lot? By promising that Christianity would produce the abolition of the slave-trade? No; though this *was* to be effected by Christianity; but by assuring them that, though slaves, they might be inly free; Christ's freedmen. Art thou called, being a slave? *Care not for it.*

This, too, was the real compensation offered by Christianity for injuries.

The other brother had the inheritance: and to win the inheritance he had laid upon his soul the guilt of injustice. His advantage was the property: the price he paid for that advantage was a hard heart. The injured brother had *no inheritance*, but instead he had, or might have had, innocence, and the conscious joy of knowing that he was not the injurer. Herein lay the balance.

Now there is great inconsistency between the complaints and claims that are commonly made on these subjects. There are outcries against the insolence of power and the hard-hearted selfishness of wealth. Only too often these cries have a foundation of justice. But be it remembered that these are precisely the cost at which the advantages, such as they are, are purchased. The price which the man in authority has paid for power is the temptation to be insolent. He has yielded to the temptation, and bought his advantage dear. The price which the rich man pays for his wealth is the temptation to be selfish. They have paid in

spirituals for what they have gained in temporals. Now, if you are crying for a share in that wealth, and a participation in that power, you must be content to run the risk of becoming as hard and selfish and over-bearing as the man whom you denounce. Blame their sins if you will, or despise their advantages; but do not think that you can covet their advantages, and keep clear of their temptations. God is on the side of the poor, and the persecuted, and the mourners—a light in darkness, and a life in death. But the poverty, and the persecution, and the darkness are the condition on which they feel God's presence. They must not expect to have the enjoyment of wealth and the spiritual blessings annexed to poverty at the same time. If you will be rich, you must be content to pay the price of falling into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition; and if that price be too high to pay, then you must be content with the quiet valleys of existence, where alone it is well with us: kept out of the inheritance, but having instead God for your portion, your all-sufficient and everlasting portion. Peace, and quietness, and rest with Christ.

THE ILLUSIVENESS OF LIFE

HEBREWS xi. 8–10.—"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

LAST Sunday we touched upon a thought which deserves further development. God promised Canaan to Abraham, and yet Abraham never inherited Canaan: to the last he was a wanderer there; he had no possession of his own

in its territory; if he wanted even a tomb to bury his dead, he could only obtain it by purchase. This difficulty is expressly admitted in the text, "In the land of promise he sojourned as in a strange country;" he dwelt there in tents—in changeful, moveable tabernacles—not permanent habitations; he had no home there.

It is stated, in all its startling force, in terms still more explicit, Acts vii. 5.

Now the surprising point is that Abraham, deceived, as you might almost say, did not complain of it as a deception; he was even grateful for the non-fulfilment of the promise: he does not seem to have expected its fulfilment; he did not look for Canaan, but for "a city which had foundations;" his faith appears to have consisted in disbelieving the letter, almost as much as in believing the spirit of the promise.

And herein lies a principle, which, rightly expounded, can interpret this life of ours. God's promises never are fulfilled in the sense in which they seem to have been given. Life is a deception; its anticipations, which are God's promises to the imagination, are never realized; they who know life best, and have trusted God most to fill it with blessings, are ever the first to say that life is a series of disappointments.

And in the spirit of this text we have to say that it is a wise and merciful arrangement which ordains it thus.

The wise and holy do not expect to find it otherwise—would not wish it otherwise; their wisdom consists in disbelieving its promises. To develope this idea would be a glorious task; for to justify God's ways to man, to expound the mysteriousness of our present being, to interpret God,—is not this the very essence of the ministerial office? All that I can hope, however, to-day is, not to exhaust the subject, but to furnish hints for thought. Over-statements may be made, illustrations may be inadequate, the new ground of an almost untrodden subject may be torn up too rudely; but remember, we are here to live and die; in a few years it will be all over; meanwhile, what we have to do is to try to understand, and to help one another to

understand, what it all means—what this strange and contradictory thing, which we call life, contains within it. Do not stop to ask, therefore, whether the subject was satisfactorily worked out; let each man be satisfied to have received a germ of thought which he may develope better for himself.

I. The deception of life's promise.
II. The meaning of that deception.

Let it be clearly understood, in the first place, the promise never was fulfilled. I do not say the fulfilment was delayed. I say it *never* was fulfilled. Abraham had a few feet of earth, obtained by purchase—beyond that, nothing; he died a stranger and a pilgrim in the land. Isaac had a little. So small was Jacob's hold upon his country that the last years of his life were spent in Egypt, and he died a foreigner in a strange land. His descendants came into the land of Canaan, expecting to find it a land flowing with milk and honey; they found hard work to do—war and unrest, instead of rest.

During one brief period, in the history of Israel, the promise may seem to have been fulfilled. It was during the later years of David and the earlier years of Solomon; but we have the warrant of scripture itself for affirming, that even then the promise was not fulfilled. In the Book of Psalms, David speaks of a hope of entering into a future rest. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, quoting this passage, infers from it that God's promise had not been exhausted nor fulfilled by the entrance into Canaan; for, he says, "If Joshua had given them rest then would he not have spoken of another day." Again, in this very chapter, after a long list of Hebrew saints—"These *all* died in faith, not having received the promises." To none, therefore, had the promise been fulfilled. Accordingly, writers on prophecy, in order to get over this difficulty, take for granted that there must be a future fulfilment, because the first was inadequate.

They who believe that the Jews will be restored to their native land, expect it on the express ground that Canaan has never been actually and permanently theirs. A certain tract of country—300 miles in length, by 200 in breadth—must be given, or else they think the promise has been broken. To quote the expression of one of the most eloquent of their writers, "If there be nothing yet future for Israel, then the magnificence of the promise has been lost in the poverty of its accomplishment."

I do not quote this to prove the correctness of the interpretation of the prophecy, but as an acknowledgment which may be taken so far as a proof that the promise made to Abraham has never been accomplished.

And such is life's disappointment. Its promise is, you shall have a Canaan; it turns out to be a baseless, airy dream—toil and warfare—nothing that we can call our own; not the land of rest, by any means. But we will examine this in particulars.

1. Our senses deceive us; we begin life with delusion. Our senses deceive us with respect to distance, shape, and colour. That which afar off seems oval, turns out to be circular, modified by the perspective of distance; that which appears a speck, upon nearer approach becomes a vast body. To the earlier ages the stars presented the delusion of small lamps hung in space. The beautiful berry proves to be bitter and poisonous; that which apparently moves is really at rest; that which seems to be stationary is in perpetual motion: the earth moves; the sun is still. All experience is a correction of life's delusions—a modification, a reversal of the judgment of the senses; and all life is a lesson on the falsehood of appearances.

2. Our natural anticipations deceive us—I say *natural* in contradistinction to extravagant expectations. Every human life is a fresh one, bright with hopes that will never be realized. There may be differences of character in these hopes; finer spirits may look on life as the arena of successful deeds, the more selfish as a place of personal enjoyment. With man the turning point of life may be a profession—

with woman, marriage; the one gilding the future with the triumphs of intellect, the other with the dreams of affection; but, in every case, life is not what any of them expects, but something else. It would almost seem a satire on existence to compare the youth in the outset of his career, flushed and sanguine, with the aspect of the same being when it is nearly done—worn, soberised, covered with the dust of life, and confessing that its days have been few and evil. Where is the land flowing with milk and honey?

With our affections it is still worse, because they promise more. Man's affections are but the tabernacles of Canaan—the tents of a night; not permanent habitations, even for this life. Where are the charms of character, the perfection, and the purity, and the truthfulness, which seemed so resplendent in our friend? They were only the shape of our own conceptions—our creative shaping intellect projected its own fantasies on him; and hence, we outgrow our early friendship; outgrow the intensity of all: we dwell in tents; we never find a home, even in the land of promise. Life is an unenjoyable Canaan, with nothing real or substantial in it.

3. Our expectations, resting on revelation, deceive us. The world's history has turned round two points of hope; one, the *first*—the other, the *second* coming of the Messiah. The magnificent imagery of Hebrew prophecy had described the advent of the Conqueror; He came—"a root out of a dry ground, with no form or comeliness; and when they saw Him there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him." The victory, predicted in such glowing terms, turned out to be the victory of Submission—the Law of our Humanity, which wins by gentleness and love. The promise in the letter was unfulfilled. For ages the world's hope has been the second advent. The early church expected it in their own day. "We, which are alive, and remain until the coming of our Lord."

The Saviour Himself had said, "This generation shall not pass till all things be fulfilled." Yet the Son of Man has never come, or rather, He has been *ever* coming. Un-

numbered times the judgment eagles have gathered together over corruption ripe for condemnation. Times innumerable the separation has been made between good and bad. The promise has not been fulfilled, or it has been fulfilled; but in either case anticipation has been foiled and disappointed.

There are two ways of considering this aspect of life. One is the way of sentiment; the other is the way of faith. The sentimental way is trite enough. Saint, sage, sophist, moralist, and preacher, have repeated in every possible image, till there is nothing new to say, that life is a bubble, a dream, a delusion, a phantasm. The other is the way of faith: the ancient saints felt as keenly as any moralist could feel the brokenness of its promises; they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims here; they said that they had here no continuing city; but they did not mournfully moralize on this; they said it cheerfully, and rejoiced that it was so. They felt that all was right; they knew that the promise itself had a deeper meaning; they looked undauntedly for "a city which hath foundations."

II. The second inquiry, therefore, is the meaning of this delusiveness.

1. It serves to allure us on. Suppose that a spiritual promise had been made at first to Israel; imagine that they had been informed at the outset that God's rest is inward; that the promised land is only found in the Jerusalem which is above—not material, but immaterial. That rude, gross people, yearning after the fleshpots of Egypt—willing to go back into slavery, so as only they might have enough to eat and drink—would they have quitted Egypt on such terms? Would they have begun one single step of that pilgrimage, which was to find its meaning in the discipline of ages?

We are led through life as we are allured upon a journey. Could a man see his route before him—a flat, straight road, unbroken by bush, or tree, or eminence, with the sun's heat burning down upon it, stretched out in dreary monotony—

he could scarcely find energy to begin his task; but the uncertainty of what may be seen beyond the next turn keeps expectation alive. The view that may be seen from yonder summit—the glimpse that may be caught, perhaps, as the road winds round yonder knoll—hopes like these, not far distant, beguile the traveller on from mile to mile, and from league to league.

In fact, life is an education. The object for which you educate your son is to give him strength of purpose, self-command, discipline of mental energies; but you do not reveal to your son this aim of his education; you tell him of his place in his class, of the prizes at the end of the year, of the honours to be given at college.

These are not the true incentives to knowledge; such incentives are not the highest—they are even mean, and partially injurious; yet these mean incentives stimulate and lead on, from day to day and from year to year, by a process the principle of which the boy himself is not aware of. So does God lead on, through life's unsatisfying and false reward, ever educating: Canaan first; then the hope of a Redeemer; then the millennial glory. Now what is remarkable in this is, that the delusion continued to the last; they *all* died in faith, not having received the promises; all were hoping up to the very last, and all died in faith—not in realization; for thus God has constituted the human heart. It never will be believed that this world is unreal. God has mercifully so arranged it, that the idea of delusion is incredible. You may tell the boy or girl as you will that life is a disappointment; yet however you may persuade them to adopt your *tone*, and catch the language of your sentiment, they are both looking forward to some bright distant hope—the rapture of the next vacation, or the unknown joys of the next season—and throwing into it an energy of expectation which a whole eternity is only worth. You may tell the man who has received the heart-shock from which, in this world, he will not recover, that life has nothing left; yet the stubborn heart still hopes on, ever near the prize—"wealthiest when most undone:" he has reaped the

whirlwind, but he will go on still, till life is over, sowing the wind.

Now observe the beautiful result which comes from this indestructible power of believing in spite of failure. In the first centuries, the early Christians believed that the millennial advent was close; they heard the warning of the apostle, brief and sharp, "The time is short." Now suppose that, instead of this, they had seen all the dreary page of Church history unrolled; suppose that they had known that after two thousand years the world would have scarcely spelled out three letters of the meaning of Christianity, where would have been those gigantic efforts, that life spent as on the very brink of eternity, which characterize the days of the early Church, and which was, after all, only the true life of man in time? It is thus that God has led on His world. He has conducted it as a father leads his child, when the path homeward lies over many a dreary league. He suffers him to beguile the thought of time, by turning aside to pluck now and then a flower, to chase now a butterfly; the butterfly is crushed, the flower fades, but the child is so much nearer home, invigorated and full of health, and scarcely wearied yet.

2. This non-fulfilment of promise fulfils it in a *deeper* way. The account we have given already, were it to end there, would be insufficient to excuse the failure of life's promise; by saying that it allures us would be really to charge God with deception. Now life is not deception, but illusion. We distinguish between illusion and delusion. We may paint wood so as to be taken for stone, iron, or marble; this is delusion: but you may paint a picture, in which rocks, trees, and sky are never mistaken for what they seem, yet produce all the emotion which real rocks, trees, and sky would produce. This is illusion, and this is the painter's art: never for one moment to deceive by attempted imitation, but to produce a mental state in which the feelings are suggested which the natural objects themselves would create. Let us take an instance drawn from life.

To a child the rainbow is a real thing—substantial and

palpable; its limb rests on the side of yonder hill; he believes that he can appropriate it to himself; and when, instead of gems and gold, hid in its radiant bow, he finds nothing but damp mist—cold, dreary drops of disappointment—that disappointment tells that his belief has been delusion.

To the educated man that bow is a blessed illusion, yet it never once deceives; he does not take it for what it is not, he does not expect to make it his own; he feels its beauty as much as the child could feel it, nay infinitely more —more even from the fact that he knows that it will be transient; but besides and beyond this, to him it presents a deeper loveliness; he knows the laws of light, and the laws of the human soul which gave it being. He has linked it with the laws of the universe, and with the invisible mind of God; and it brings to him a thrill of awe, and the sense of a mysterious, nameless beauty, of which the child did not conceive. It is illusion still; but it has fulfilled the promise. In the realm of spirit, in the temple of the soul, it is the same. All is illusion; but "we look for a city which hath foundations;" and in this the promise is fulfilled.

And such was Canaan to the Israelites. To some doubtless it was delusion. They expected to find their reward in a land of milk and honey. They were bitterly disappointed, and expressed their disappointment loudly enough in their murmurs against Moses, and their rebellion against his successors. But to others, as to Abraham, Canaan was the bright illusion which never deceived, but for ever shone before as the type of something more real. And even taking the promise literally, though they built in tents, and could not call a foot of land their own, was not its beauty theirs? Were not its trellised vines, and glorious pastures, and rich olive-fields, ministers to the enjoyment of those who had all in God, though its milk, and oil, and honey, could not be enjoyed with exclusiveness of appropriation? Yet over and above and beyond this, there was a more blessed fulfilment of the promise; there was a city which had foundations—built and made by God—toward which

the anticipation of this Canaan was leading them. The Kingdom of God was forming in their souls, for ever disappointing them by the unreal, and teaching them that what is spiritual, and belongs to mind and character, alone can be eternal. We will illustrate this principle from the common walks of life. The principle is, that the reward we get is not the reward for which we worked, but a different one; deeper and more permanent. The merchant labours all his life, and the hope which leads him on is perhaps wealth: well, at sixty years of age he attains wealth; is that the reward of sixty years of toil? Ten years of enjoyment, when the senses can enjoy no longer—a country seat, splendid plate, a noble establishment? Oh, no! a reward deeper than he dreamed of. Habits of perseverance; a character trained by industry: that is his reward. He was carried on from year to year by, if he were wise, illusion; if he were unwise, delusion; but he reaped a more enduring substance in himself.

Take another instance: the public man, warrior, or statesman, who has served his country, and complains at last, in bitter disappointment, that his country has not fulfilled his expectations in rewarding him—that is, it has not given him titles, honours, wealth. But titles, honours, wealth—are these the rewards of well-doing? can they reward it? would it be well-doing if they could? To *be* such a man, to have the power of *doing* such deeds, what could be added to that reward by having? This same apparent contradiction, which was found in Judaism, subsists too in Christianity; we will state it in the words of an apostle: "Godliness is profitable for all things; having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." Now for the fulfilment: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, then are we of all men most miserable." Godliness is profitable; but its profit, it appears, consists in finding that all is loss: yet in this way you teach your son. You will tell him that if he will be good all men will love him. You say that "Honesty is the best policy," yet in your heart of hearts you know that you are leading him

on by a delusion. Christ was good. Was He loved by all? In proportion as he—your son—is like Christ, *he will be loved, not by the many, but by the few.* Honesty is *not* the best *policy;* the commonplace honesty of the market-place may be—the vulgar honesty which goes no further than paying debts accurately; but that transparent Christian honesty of a life which in every act is bearing witness to the truth, that is not the way to get on in life—the reward of such a life is the Cross. Yet you were right in teaching your son this: you told him what was true; truer than he could comprehend. It *is* better to be honest and good; better than he can know or dream; better even in this life; better by so much as *being* good is better than *having* good. But, in a rude coarse way, you must express the blessedness on a level with his capacity; you must state the truth in a way which he will inevitably interpret falsely. The true interpretation nothing but experience can teach.

And this is what God does. His promises are true, though illusive; far truer than we at first take them to be. We work for a mean, low, sensual happiness, all the while he is leading us on to a spiritual blessedness—unfathomably deep. This is the life of faith. We live by faith, and not by sight. We do not preach that all is disappointment—the dreary creed of sentimentalism; but we preach that *nothing* here is disappointment, if rightly understood. We do not comfort the poor man, by saying that the riches that he has not now he will have hereafter—the difference between himself and the man of wealth being only this, that the one has for time what the other will have for eternity; but what we say is, that that which you have failed in reaping here, you never will reap, if you expected the harvest of Canaan. God has no Canaan for His own; no milk and honey for the luxury of the senses; for the city which hath foundations is built in the soul of man. He in whom Godlike character dwells has all the universe for his own—"All things," saith the apostle, "are yours; whether life or death, or things present, or things to come; if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the *promise.*"

THE IRREPARABLE PAST

MARK xiv. 41, 42.—"And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand."

IT is upon two sentences of this passage that our attention is to be fixed to-day—sentences which in themselves are apparently contradictory, but which are pregnant with a lesson of the deepest practical import. Looked at in the mere meaning of the words as they stand, our Lord's first command given to His disciples, "Sleep on now, and take your rest," is inconsistent with the second command which follows almost in the same breath, "Rise, let us be going." A permission to slumber, and a warning to arouse at once, are injunctions which can scarcely stand together in the same sentence consistently.

Our first inquiry therefore is, what did our Redeemer mean? We shall arrive at the true solution of this difficulty if we review the circumstances under which these words were spoken. The account with which these verses stand connected, belongs to one of the last scenes in the drama of our Master's earthly pilgrimage: it is found in the history of the trial-hour which was passed in the Garden of Gethsemane. And an hour it was indeed big with the destinies of the world, for the command had gone forth to seize the Saviour's person: but the Saviour was still at large and free. Upon the success or the frustration of that plan the world's fate was trembling. Three men were selected to be witnesses of the sufferings of that hour: three men, the favoured ones on all occasions of the apostolic band, and the single injunction which had been laid upon them was, "Watch with me one hour." That charge to watch or keep awake seems to have been given with two ends in view. He asked them to keep awake, first that they might sympathize with Him. He commanded them to keep awake

that they might be on their guard against surprise: that they might afford sympathy, because never in all His career did Christ more stand in need of such soothing as it was in the power of man to give. It is true that was not much; the struggle, and the agony, and the making up of the mind to death had something in them too Divine and too mysterious to be understood by the disciples, and therefore sympathy could but reach a portion of what our Redeemer felt. Yet still it appears to have been an additional pang in Christ's anguish to find that He was left thoroughly alone—to endure, while even His own friends did not compassionate His endurance. We know what a relief it is to see the honest affectionate face of a menial servant, or some poor dependant regretting that your suffering may be infinitely above his comprehension. It may be a secret which you cannot impart to him: or it may be a mental distress which his mind is too uneducated to appreciate: yet still his sympathy in your dark hour is worth a world. What you suffer he knows not, but he knows you do suffer, and it pains him to think of it: there is balm to you in that. This is the power of sympathy. We can do little for one another in this world. Little, very little, can be done when the worst must come; but yet to know that the pulses of a human heart are vibrating with yours, there is something in that, let the distance between man and man be ever so immeasurable, exquisitely soothing. It was this, and but this, in the way of feeling, that Christ asked of Peter, James, and John: Watch—be awake: let Me not feel that when I agonize, you can be at ease and comfortable. But it would seem there was another thing which He asked in the way of assistance. The plot to capture Him was laid; the chance of that plot's success lay in making the surprise so sudden as to cut off all possibility of escape. The hope of defeating that plot depended upon the fidelity of apostolic vigilance. Humanly speaking, had they been vigilant they might have saved Him. Breathless listening for the sound of footsteps in the distance; eyes anxiously straining through the trees to distinguish the

glitter of the lanterns; unremitting apprehension catching from the word of Christ an intimation that He was in danger, and so giving notice on the first approach of anything like intrusion,—that would have been watching.

That command to watch was given twice—first, when Christ first retired aside leaving the disciples by themselves; secondly, in a reproachful way when He returned and found His request disregarded. He waked them up once and said, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" He came again, and found their eyes closed once more. On that occasion not a syllable fell from His lips; He did not waken them a second time. He passed away sad and disappointed, and left them to their slumbers. But when He came the third time, it was no longer possible for their sleep to do Him harm, or their watching to do Him good. The precious opportunity was lost for ever. Sympathy—vigilance—the hour for these was past. The priests had succeeded in their surprise, and Judas had well led them through the dark, with unerring accuracy, to the very spot where his Master knelt; and there were seen quite close, the dark figures shown in relief against the glare of the red torchlight, and every now and then the gleam glittering from the bared steel and the Roman armour. It was all over, they might sleep as they liked, their sleeping could do no injury now; their watching could do no good. And therefore, partly in bitterness, partly in reproach, partly in a kind of earnest irony, partly in sad earnest, our Master said to His disciples: Sleep on now: there is no use in watching now: take your rest—for ever if you will. Sleep and rest can do me no more harm now, for all that watching might have done is lost.

But, brethren, we have to observe that in the next sentence our Redeemer addresses Himself to the consideration of what could yet be done; the best thing as circumstances then stood. So far as any good to be got from watching went they might sleep on: there was no reparation for the fault that had been done: but so far as duty went, there was still much of endurance to which they had to rouse

themselves. They could not save their Master, but they might loyally and manfully share His disgrace, and if it must be, His death. They could not put off the penalty, but they might steel themselves cheerfully to share it. Safety was out of the question: but they might meet their fate, instead of being overwhelmed by it: and so, as respected what was gone by, Christ said, "Sleep," what is done cannot be undone: but as respected the duties that were lying before them still, He said, We must make the best of it that can be made: rouse yourselves to dare the worst: on to enact your parts like men. Rise, let us be going—we have something still left to do. Here then we have two subjects of contemplation distinctly marked out for us.

I. The irreparable Past.
II. The available Future.

The words of Christ are not like the words of other men: His sentences do not end with the occasion which called them forth: every sentence of Christ's is a deep principle of human life, and it is so with these sentences: "Sleep on now"—that is a principle. "Rise up, and let us be going"—that is another principle. The principle contained in "Sleep on now" is this, that the past is irreparable, and after a certain moment waking will do no good. You may improve the future, the past is gone beyond recovery. As to all that is gone by, so far as the hope of altering it goes, you may sleep on and take your rest: there is no power in earth or heaven that can undo what has once been done.

Now let us proceed to give illustrations of this principle.

It is true, first of all, with respect to *time* that is gone by. Time is the solemn inheritance to which every man is born heir, who has a life-rent of this world—a little section cut out of eternity and given us to do our work in: an eternity before, an eternity behind; and the small stream between, floating swiftly from the one into the vast bosom of the other. The man who has felt with all his soul the significance of time will not be long in learning any lesson

that this world has to teach him. Have you ever felt it, my Christian brethren? Have you ever realized how your own little streamlet is gliding away, and bearing you along with it towards that awful other world of which all things here are but the thin shadows, down into that eternity towards which the confused wreck of all earthly things are bound? Let us realize that, beloved brethren: until that sensation of time and the infinite meaning which is wrapped up in it, has taken possession of our souls, there is no chance of our ever feeling strongly that it is worse than madness to sleep that time away. Every day in this world has its work; and every day as it rises out of eternity keeps putting to each of us the question afresh, What will you do before to-day has sunk into eternity and nothingness again? And now what have we to say with respect to this strange solemn thing—Time? That men do with it through life just what the apostles did for one precious and irreparable hour of it in the garden of Gethsemane: they go to sleep. Have you ever seen those marble statues in some public square or garden, which art has so fashioned into a perennial fountain that through the lips or through the hands the clear water flows in a perpetual stream, on and on for ever; and the marble stands there—passive, cold—making no effort to arrest the gliding water?

It is so that time flows through the hands of men—swift, never pausing till it has run itself out; and there is the man petrified into a marble sleep, not feeling what it is which is passing away for ever. It is so, brethren, just so, that the destiny of nine men out of ten accomplishes itself, slipping away from them, aimless, useless, till it is too late. And this passage asks us with all the solemn thoughts which crowd around an approaching eternity, — what has been our life, and what do we intend it shall be? Yesterday, last week, last year—they are gone. Yesterday, for example, was such a day as never was before, and never can be again. Out of darkness and eternity it was born a new fresh day: into darkness and eternity it sank again for ever. It had a voice calling to us, of its own. Its own work—its own

duties. What were we doing yesterday? Idling, whiling away the time in light and luxurious literature—not as life's relaxation, but as life's business? thrilling our hearts with the excitements of life—contriving how to spend the day most pleasantly? Was that our day? Sleep, brethren! all that is but the sleep of the three apostles. And now let us remember this: there is a day coming when that sleep will be broken rudely, with a shock: there is a day in our future lives when our time will be counted not by years nor by months, nor yet by hours, but by minutes—the day when unmistakeable symptoms shall announce that the Messengers of Death have come to take us.

That startling moment will come which it is vain to attempt to realize now, when it will be felt that it is all over at last—that our chance and our trial are past. The moment that we have tried to think of, shrunk from, put away from us, here it is—going too, like all other moments that have gone before it: and then with eyes unsealed at last, you look back on the life which is gone by. There is no mistake about it: there it is, a sleep, a most palpable sleep—self-indulged unconsciousness of high destinies, and God and Christ: a sleep when Christ was calling out to you to watch with Him one hour—a sleep when there was something to be done—a sleep broken, it may be, once or twice by restless dreams, and by a voice of truth which would make itself heard at times, but still a sleep which was only rocked into deeper stillness by interruption. And now from the undone eternity the boom of whose waves is distinctly audible upon your soul, there comes the same voice again—a solemn sad voice—but no longer the same word "Watch"—other words altogether, "You may go to sleep." It is too late to wake: there is no science in earth or heaven to recall time that once has fled.

Again, this principle of the irreparable past holds good with respect to preparing for temptation. That hour in the garden was a precious opportunity given for laying in spiritual strength. Christ knew it well. He struggled and fought *then:* therefore there was no struggling afterwards—

no trembling in the judgment-hall—no shrinking on the cross, but only dignified and calm victory; for He had fought the Temptation on His knees beforehand, and conquered all in the garden. The battle of the Judgment-hall, the battle of the Cross, were already fought and over, in the Watch and in the Agony. The apostles missed the meaning of that hour; and therefore when it came to the question of trial, the loudest boaster of them all shrunk from acknowledging Whose he was, and the rest played the part of the craven and the renegade. And if the reason of this be asked, it is simply this: They went to trial unprepared: they had not prayed: and what is a Christian without prayer but Samson without his talisman of hair?

Brethren, in this world, when there is any foreseen or suspected danger before us, it is our duty to forecast our trial. It is our wisdom to put on our armour—to consider what lies before us—to call up resolution in God's strength to go through what we may have to do. And it is marvellous how difficulties smooth away before a Christian when he does this. Trials that cost him a struggle to meet even in imagination—like the heavy sweat of Gethsemane, when Christ was looking forward and feeling exceeding sorrowful even unto death—come to their crisis; and behold, to his astonishment they are nothing—they have been fought and conquered already. But if you go to meet those temptations, not as Christ did, but as the apostles did prayerless, trusting to the chance impulse of the moment, you may make up your mind to fail. That opportunity lost is irreparable: it is your doom to yield then. Those words are true, you may "sleep on now, and take your rest," for you have betrayed yourself into the hands of danger.

And now one word about prayer. It is a preparation for danger, it is the armour for battle. Go not, my Christian brother, into the dangerous world without it. You kneel down at night to pray, and drowsiness weighs down your eyelids. A hard day's work is a kind of excuse, and you shorten your prayer and resign yourself softly to repose. The morning breaks, and it may be you rise late, and so

your early devotions are not done, or done with irregular haste. No watching unto prayer—wakefulness once more omitted. And now we ask, is that reparable? Brethren, we solemnly believe not. There has been that done which cannot be undone. You have given up your prayer, and you will suffer for it. Temptation is before you, and you are not fit to meet it. There is a guilty feeling on the soul, and you linger at a distance from Christ. It is no marvel if that day in which you suffered drowsiness to interfere with prayer, be a day on which you betray Him by cowardice and soft shrinking from duty. Let it be a principle through life, moments of prayer intruded upon by sloth cannot be made up. We may get experience, but we cannot get back the rich freshness and the strength which were wrapped up in these moments.

Once again this principle is true in another respect. Opportunities of doing good do not come back. We are here, brethren, for a most definite and intelligible purpose—to educate our own hearts by deeds of love, and to be the instrument of blessing to our brother men. There are two ways in which this is to be done—by guarding them from danger, and by soothing them in their rough path by kindly sympathies—the two things which the apostles were asked to do for Christ. And it is an encouraging thought, that he who cannot do the one has at least the other in his power. If he cannot protect, he can sympathize. Let the weakest—let the humblest in this congregation remember, that in his daily course he can if he will, shed around him almost a heaven. Kindly words, sympathizing attentions, watchfulness against wounding men's sensitiveness—these cost very little, but they are priceless in their value. Are they not, brethren, almost the staple of our daily happiness? From hour to hour, from moment to moment, we are supported, blest, by small kindnesses. And then consider:—Here is a section of life one-third, one-half, it may be three-fourths gone by, and the question before us is, how much has been done in that way? Who has charged himself with the guardianship of his brother's safety? Who has laid on

himself as a sacred duty to sit beside his brother suffering? Oh! my brethren, it is the omission of these things which is irreparable: irreparable, when you look to the purest enjoyment which might have been your own: irreparable, when you consider the compunction which belongs to deeds of love not done; irreparable, when you look to this groaning world, and feel that its agony of bloody sweat has been distilling all night, and you were dreaming away in luxury! Shame, shame upon our selfishness! There is an infinite voice in the sin and sufferings of earth's millions, which makes every idle moment, every moment that is which is not relaxation, guilt; and seems to cry out, If you will not bestir yourself for love's sake now, it will soon be too late.

Lastly, this principle applies to a misspent youth. There is something very remarkable in the picture which is placed before us. There is a picture of *One* struggling, toiling, standing between others and danger, and those others quietly content to reap the benefit of that struggle without anxiety of their own. And there is something in this singularly like the position in which all young persons are placed. The young are by God's Providence exempted in a great measure from anxiety: they are as the apostles were in relation to their Master: their friends stand between them and the struggles of existence. They are not called upon to think for themselves: the burden is borne by others. They get their bread without knowing or caring how it is paid for: they smile and laugh without a suspicion of the anxious thoughts of day and night which a parent bears to enable them to smile. So to speak they are sleeping—and it is not a guilty sleep—while another watches.

My young brethren—youth is one of the precious opportunities of life—rich in blessing if you choose to make it so, but having in it the materials of undying remorse if you suffer it to pass unimproved. Your quiet Gethsemane is now. Gethsemane's struggles you cannot know yet. Take care that you do not learn too well Gethsemane's sleep. Do you know how you can imitate the apostles in their fatal sleep?

You can suffer your young days to pass idly and uselessly away: you can live as if you had nothing to do but to enjoy yourselves: you can let others think for you, and not try to become thoughtful yourselves, till the business and the difficulties of life come upon you unprepared, and you find yourselves like men waking from sleep, hurried, confused, scarcely able to stand, with all the faculties bewildered, not knowing right from wrong, led headlong to evil, just because you have not given yourselves in time to learn what is good. All that is sleep. And now let us mark it. You cannot repair that in after-life. Oh! remember every period of human life has its own lesson, and you cannot learn that lesson in the next period. The boy has one set of lessons to learn, and the young man another, and the grown-up man another. Let us consider one single instance. The boy has to learn docility, gentleness of temper, reverence, submission. All those feelings which are to be transferred afterwards in full cultivation to God, like plants nursed in a hot-bed and then planted out, are to be cultivated first in youth. Afterwards, those habits which have been merely habits of obedience to an earthly parent, are to become religious submission to a heavenly parent. Our parents stand to us in the place of God. Veneration for our parents is intended to become afterwards adoration for something higher. Take that single instance; and now suppose that that is not learnt in boyhood. Suppose that the boy sleeps to that duty of veneration, and learns only flippancy, insubordination, and the habit of deceiving his father,—can that, my young brethren, be repaired afterwards? Humanly speaking not. Life is like the transition from class to class in a school. The school-boy who has not learnt arithmetic in the earlier classes cannot secure it when he comes to mechanics in the higher: each section has its own sufficient work. He may be a good philosopher or a good historian, but a bad arithmetician he remains for life; for he cannot lay the foundation at the moment when he must be building the superstructure. The regiment which has not perfected itself in its manœuvres on the parade-ground cannot learn

them before the guns of the enemy. And just in the same way, the young person who has slept his youth away, and become idle, and selfish, and hard, cannot make up for that afterwards. He may do something, he may be religious—yes; but he cannot be what he might have been. There is a part of his heart which will remain uncultivated to the end. The apostles could share their Master's sufferings—they could not save Him. Youth has its irreparable past.

And therefore, my young brethren, let it be impressed upon you,—NOW is a time, infinite in its value for eternity, which will never return again. Sleep not: learn that there is a very solemn work of heart which must be done while the stillness of the garden of your Gethsemane gives you time. Now—or Never.

The treasures at your command are infinite. Treasures of time—treasures of youth—treasures of opportunity—that grown-up men would sacrifice everything they have to possess. O for ten years of youth back again with the added experience of age! But it cannot be: they must be content to sleep on now, and take their rest.

We are to pass on next to a few remarks on the other sentence in this passage, which brings before us for consideration the future which is still available: for we are to observe, that our Master did not limit His apostles to a regretful recollection of their failure. Recollection of it He did demand. There were the materials of a most cutting self-reproach in the few words He said: for they contained all the desolation of that sad word *never*. Who knows not what that word wraps up—Never— it *never* can be undone. Sleep on. But yet there was no sickly lingering over the irreparable. Our Master's words are the words of one who had fully recognized the hopelessness of his position, but yet manfully and calmly had numbered his resources and scanned his duties, and then braced up his mind to meet the exigencies of his situation with no passive endurance; the moment was come for action—"Rise, let us be going."

Now the broad general lesson which we gain from this is not hard to read. It is that a Christian is to be for ever

rousing himself to recognize the duties which lie before him *now*. In Christ the motto is ever this, "Let us be going." Let me speak to the conscience of some one. Perhaps yours is a very remorseful past—a foolish, frivolous, disgraceful, frittered past. Well, Christ says,—My servant, be sad, but no languor; there is work to be done for me yet—Rise up, be going! Oh, my brethren, Christ takes your wretched remnants of life—the feeble pulses of a heart which has spent its best hours not for Him, but for self and for enjoyment, and in His strange love He condescends to accept them.

Let me speak to another kind of experience. Perhaps we feel that we have faculties which never have and now never will find their right field; perhaps we are ignorant of many things which cannot be learnt now; perhaps the seed-time of life has gone by, and certain powers of heart and mind will not grow now; perhaps you feel that the best days of life are gone, and it is too late to begin things which were in your power once:—still, my repentant brother, there is encouragement from your Master yet. Wake to the opportunities that yet remain. Ten years of life—five years—one year—say you have only that,—Will you sleep that away because you have already slept too long? Eternity is crying out to you louder and louder as you near its brink,—Rise, be going: count your resources: learn what you are not fit for, and give up wishing for it: learn what you *can* do, and do it with the energy of a man. That is the great lesson of this passage. But now consider it a little more closely.

Christ impressed two things on His apostles' minds. 1. The duty of Christian earnestness—"Rise." 2. The duty of Christian energy—"Let us be going."

Christ roused them to earnestness when He said, "Rise." A short, sharp, rousing call. They were to start up and wake to the realities of their position. The guards were on them: their Master was about to be led away to doom. That was an awakening which would make men spring to their feet in earnest. Brethren, goodness and earnestness are nearly the same thing. In the language in which this

Bible was written there was one word which expressed them both: what we translate a good man, in Greek is literally "earnest." The Greeks felt that to be earnest was nearly identical with being good. But however, there is a day in life when a man must be earnest, but it does not follow that he will be good. "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." That is a sound that will thunder through the most fast-locked slumber, and rouse men whom sermons cannot rouse. But that will not make them holy. Earnestness of *life*, brethren, that is goodness. Wake in death you *must*, for it is an earnest thing to die. Shall it be this, I pray you?—Shall it be the voice of death which first says, "Arise," at the very moment when it says, "Sleep on for ever?"—Shall it be the bridal train sweeping by, and the shutting of the doors, and the discovery that the lamp is gone out?—Shall *that* be the first time you know that it is an earnest thing to live? Let us feel that we have been *doing*; learn what time is—sliding from you, and not stopping when you stop: learn what sin is: learn what "*never*" is: "Awake, thou that sleepest."

Lastly, Christian energy—"Let us be going." There were two ways open to Christ in which to submit to His doom. He might have waited for it: instead of which He went to meet the soldiers. He took up the Cross, the cup of anguish was not forced between His lips, He took it with His own hands, and drained it quickly to the last drop. In after-years the disciples understood the lesson, and acted on it. They did not wait till persecution overtook them; they braved the Sanhedrim; they fronted the world: they proclaimed aloud the unpopular and unpalatable doctrines of the Resurrection and the Cross. Now in this there lies a principle. Under no conceivable set of circumstances are we justified in sitting

——— "By the poison'd springs of life,
Waiting for the morrow which shall free us from the strife."

Under no circumstances, whether of pain, or grief, or disappointment, or irreparable mistake, can it be true that there

is not something to be *done*, as well as something to be suffered. And thus it is that the spirit of Christianity draws over our life, not a leaden cloud of Remorse and Despondency, but a sky—not perhaps of radiant, but yet—of most serene and chastened and manly hope. There is a past which is gone for ever. But there is a Future which is still our own.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS BY OBLIVION OF THE PAST

PHIL. iii. 13, 14.—"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

THE first thing which strikes us on reading these verses is, that the Apostle Paul places himself on a level with the persons whom he addresses. He speaks to them as frail, weak men; and he gives them in himself a specimen of what frailty and weakness can achieve in the strength of Christ. And it is for this reason that the passage before us is one of the most encouraging in all the writings of St. Paul. For there is one aspect in which the apostle is presented to us, which is perhaps a depressing one. When we look at his almost superhuman career, reverence and admiration we must feel, but so far does he seem removed from ordinary life, that imitation appears out of the question. Let us select but two instances of this discouraging aspect of the apostle's life. Most of us know the feeling of unaccountable depression which rests upon us when we find ourselves alone in a foreign town, with its tide of population ebbing and flowing past us, a mass of human life, in which we ourselves are nothing. But that was Paul's daily existence. He had

consecrated himself to an almost perpetual exile. He had given up the endearments of domestic life for ever. Home, in this world, St. Paul had none. With a capacity for the tenderest feelings of our nature, he had chosen for his lot the task of living among strangers, and as soon as they ceased to be strangers, quitting them again. He went on month by month attaching congregations to himself, and month by month dooming himself to severance. And yet I know not that we read of one single trace of depression or discouragement suffered to rest on the apostle's mind. He seems to have been ever fresh and sanguine, the salient energy of his soul rising above the need of all human sympathy. It is the magnificent spectacle of missionary life, with more than missionary loneliness. There is something almost awful in the thought of a man who was so thoroughly in the next world that he needed not the consolations of this world. And yet, observe, there is nothing encouraging for us in this. It is very grand to look upon, very commanding, very full of awe; but it is so much above us, so little like anything human that we know of, that we content ourselves with gazing on him as on the gliding swallow's flight, which we wonder at, but never think of imitating.

Now, let us look at one other feature in St. Paul's character—his superiority to those temptations which are potent with ordinary men. We say nothing of his being above the love of money: of his indifference to a life of comfort and personal indulgence. Those temptations only assail the lower part of our nature; and it is not saintliness to be above these: common excellence is impossible otherwise. But when we come to look for those temptations which master the higher and the nobler man, ambition, jealousy, pride, it is not that we see them conquered by the apostle; they scarcely seem to have even lodged in his bosom at all. It was open to the apostle, if he had felt the ambition, to make for himself a name, to become the leader of a party in Corinth and in the world. And yet remember we not how sternly he put down the thought, and how he laboured to merge his individuality in the cause, and make

himself an equal of inferior men? "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, servants, by whom ye believed?"

Again, in respect of jealousy. Jealousy seems almost inseparable from human love. It is but the other side of love, the shadow cast by the light when the darker body intervenes. There came to him in prison that most cutting of all news to a minister's heart, that others were trying to supplant him in the affections of his converts. But his was that lofty love which cares less for reciprocation than for the well-being of the objects loved. The rival teachers were teaching from emulation; still they could not but bless by preaching to his disciples. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, "Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Not a trace of jealousy in these words.

Once more—Degrading things were laid to his charge. The most liberal minded of mankind was charged with bigotry. The most generous of men was suspected of avarice. If ever pride were venial, it had been then. Yet read through the whole of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and say if one spark of pride be visible. He might have shut himself up in high and dignified silence. He might have refused to condescend to solicit a renewal of the love which had once grown cold; and yet we look in vain for the symptoms of offended pride. Take this one passage as a specimen. "Behold this third time I am willing to come unto you . . . and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am beloved."

In this there is very little encouragement. A man so thoroughly above human resentment, human passions, human weakness, does not seem to us an example. The nearer humanity approaches a perfect standard, the less does it command our sympathy. A man must be weak before we can feel encouraged to attempt what he has done. It is not the Redeemer's sinlessness, nor his unconquerable fidelity to duty, nor His superhuman nobleness, that win our desire to

imitate. Rather His tears at the grave of friendship, His shrinking from the sharpness of death, and the feeling of human doubt which swept across His soul like a desolation. These make Him one of us, and therefore our example.

And it is on this account that this passage seems to us so full of encouragement. It is the precious picture of a frail and struggling apostle—precious both to the man and to the minister. To the man, because it tells him that what he feels Paul felt, imperfect, feeble, far from what he would wish to be; yet with sanguine hope, expecting progress in the saintly life. Precious to the minister, because it tells him that his very weakness may be subservient to a people's strength. Not in his transcendent gifts—not in his saintly endowments—not even in his apostolic devotedness is St. Paul so close to our hearts, as when he makes himself one with us, and says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." And we know not how otherwise any minister could hope to do good, when he addresses men who are infinitely his superiors in almost everything. We know not how else he could urge on to a sanctity which he has not himself attained; we know not how he could dare to speak severely of weaknesses by which he himself is overpowered, and passions of which he feels in himself all the terrible tyranny, if it were not that he expects to have tacitly understood that in his own case which the apostle urged in every form of expression: Brethren, be as I am, for I am as ye are—struggling, baffled, but panting for emancipation.

We confine ourselves to two subjects:

I. The apostle's object in this life.
II. The means which he used for attaining it.

I. The apostle's object or aim in this life was "perfection." In the verse before—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."—Perfection was his unreached mark.

And less than this no Christian can aim at. There are given to us "exceeding great and precious promises," that

by means of these we might be partakers of the Divine Nature. Not to be equal to the standard of our day, nor even to surpass it. Not to be superior to the men amongst whom we live. Not to forgive those who have little to be forgiven. Not to love our friends—But to be the children of our Father—to be pure even as Christ is pure—to be "perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

It is easily perceivable why this perfection is unattainable in this life. Faultlessness is conceivable, being merely the negation of evil. But perfection is positive, the attainment of all conceivable excellence. It is long as Eternity—expansive as God. Perfection is our mark: yet never will the aim be so true and steady as to strike the golden centre. Perfection of character, yet even to the dying hour, it will be but this, "I count not myself to have apprehended." Christian life is like those questions in mathematics which never can be exactly answered. All you can attain is an approximation to the truth. You may labour on for years and never reach it; yet your labour is not in vain. Every figure you add makes the fraction nearer than the last to the million millionth; and so it is with holiness. Christ is our mark—the perfect standard of God in Christ. But be as holy as you will, there is a step nearer, and another, and another, and so infinitely on.

To this object the apostle gave himself with singleness of aim. "*This one thing I do.*" The life of man is a vagrant changeful desultoriness; like that of children sporting on an enamelled meadow, chasing now a painted butterfly, which loses its charm by being caught—now a wreath of mist, which falls damp upon the hand with disappointment—now a feather of thistle-down, which is crushed in the grasp. In the midst of all this fickleness, St. Paul had found a purpose to which he gave the undivided energy of his soul. "This one thing I do—I press toward the mark."

This is intelligible enough in the case of a minister; for whether he be in the pulpit or beside a sick man's bed—or furnishing his mind in the study, evidently and unmistakably

it is his profession to be doing only one thing. But in the manifold life of the man of the world, and business, it is not so easy to understand how this can be carried out. To answer this, we observe, there is a difference between doing and being. Perfection is being, not doing—it is not to effect an act but to achieve a character. If the aim of life were to do something, then, as in an earthly business, except in doing this one thing the business would be at a standstill. The student is not doing the one thing of student-life when he has ceased to think or read. The labourer leaves his work undone when the spade is not in his hand, and he sits beneath the hedge to rest. But in Christian life, every moment and every act is an opportunity for doing the one thing of *becoming* Christ-like. Every day is full of a most impressive experience. Every temptation to evil temper which can assail us to-day will be an opportunity to decide the question whether we shall gain the calmness and the rest of Christ, or whether we shall be tossed by the restlessness and agitation of the world. Nay, the very vicissitudes of the seasons, day and night, heat and cold, affecting us variably, and producing exhilaration or depression, are so contrived as to conduce towards the being which we become, and decide whether we shall be masters of ourselves, or whether we shall be swept at the mercy of accident and circumstance, miserably susceptible of merely outward influences. Infinite as are the varieties of life, so manifold are the paths to saintly character: and he who has not found out how directly or indirectly to make everything converge towards his soul's sanctification, has as yet missed the meaning of this life.

In pressing towards this "mark," the apostle attained a prize; and here I offer an observation, which is not one of mere subtlety of refinement, but deeply practical. The mark was perfection of character—the prize was blessedness. But the apostle did not aim at the prize of blessedness: he aimed at the mark of perfectness. In becoming perfect he attained happiness, but his primary aim was not happiness.

We may understand this by an illustration. In student-

life there are those who seek knowledge for its own sake, and there are those who seek it for the sake of the prize, and the honour, and the subsequent success in life that knowledge brings. To those who seek knowledge for its own sake the labour is itself reward. Attainment is the highest reward. Doubtless the prize stimulates exertion; encourages and forms a part of the motive; but only a subordinate one: and knowledge would still have "a price above rubies," if there were no prize at all. They who seek knowledge for the sake of a prize are not genuine lovers of knowledge—they only love the rewards of knowledge: had it no honour or substantial advantage connected with it, they would be indolent.

Applying this to our subject, I say that is a spurious goodness which is good for the sake of reward. The child that speaks truth for the sake of the praise of truth, is not truthful. The man who is honest because honesty is the best policy, has not integrity in his heart. He who endeavours to be humble, and holy, and perfect, in order to win heaven, has only a counterfeit religion. God for His own sake—Goodness because it is good—Truth because it is lovely—this is the Christian's aim. The prize is only an incentive: inseparable from success, but not the aim itself.

With this limitation, however, we remark that it is a Christian duty to dwell much more on the thought of future blessedness than most men do. If ever the apostle's steps began to flag, the radiant diadem before him gave new vigour to his heart; and we know how at the close of his career the vision became more vivid and more entrancing. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory!" It is our privilege, if we are on our way to God, to keep steadily before us the thought of home. Make it a matter of habit. Force yourself at night, alone, in the midst of the world's bright sights, to pause to think of the heaven which is yours. Let it calm you and ennoble you, and give you cheerfulness to endure. It was so that Moses was enabled to live amongst all the fascinations of his courtly life, with a heart unseduced from his laborious destiny. By faith . . .

"esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Why? "for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." It was so that our Master strengthened His human soul for its sharp earthly endurance. "For the joy that was set before him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." If we would become heavenly-minded, we must let the imagination realize the blessedness to which we are moving on. Let us think much of rest,—the rest which is not of indolence, but of powers in perfect equilibrium. The rest which is deep as summer midnight, yet full of life and force as summer sunshine, the sabbath of Eternity. Let us think of the love of God, which we shall feel in its full tide upon our souls. Let us think of that marvellous career of sublime occupation which shall belong to the spirits of just men made perfect; when we shall fill a higher place in God's universe, and more consciously, and with more distinct insight, co-operate with God in the rule over His Creation. "I press toward the mark—for the prize."

II. We pass to our second topic. The means which Paul found available for the attainment of Divine and perfect character. His great principle was to forget the things which were behind, and to reach forward to the things which were before. The wisdom of a divine life lies hid in this principle. I shall endeavour to expand the sentiment to make it intelligible.

What are the things behind, which are to be forgotten?

1. If we would progress in Christian life, we must forget the days of innocence that lie behind us. Let not this be misunderstood. Innocent, literally, no man ever is. We come into the world with tendencies to evil; but there was a time in our lives when those were only tendencies. A proneness to sin we had; but we had not yet sinned. The moment had not yet arrived when that cloud settles down upon the heart, which in all of after-life is never entirely removed: the sense of guilt, the anguish of lost innocence, the restless feeling of a heart no longer pure. Popularly,

we call that innocence; and when men become bitterly aware that early innocence of heart is gone, they feel as if all were lost, and so look back to what they reckon holier days with a peculiar fondness of regret. I believe there is much that is merely feeble and sentimental in this regret. Our early innocence is nothing more than ignorance of evil. Christian life is not a retaining of that ignorance of evil: nor even a returning of it again. We lose our mere negative sinlessness. We put on our firm manly holiness. Human innocence is not to know evil. Christian saintliness is to know evil and good, and prefer good. It is possible for a parent, with over-fastidious refinement, to prolong the duration of this innocence unnaturally. He may lock up his library, and prevent the entrance to forbidden books;—he may exercise a jealous censorship over every book and every companion that comes into the house;—he may remove the public journal from the table lest an eye may chance to rest upon the contaminating portion of its pages; but he has only put off the evil hour. He has sent into the world a young man of eighteen or twenty, ignorant as a child of evil, but not innocent as an angel who abhors the evil. No, we cannot get back our past ignorance, neither is it desirable we should. No sane mind wishes for that which is impossible. And it is no more to be regretted than the blossom is to be regretted when fruit is hardening in its place;—no more to be regretted than the slender gracefulness of the sapling, when you have got instead the woody fibre of the heart of oak of which the ship is made;—no more to be regretted than the green blade when the ear has come instead, bending down in yellow ripeness. Our innocence is gone, withered with the business-like contact with the great world. It is one of the things behind. Forget it. It was worth very little. And now for something of a texture more firm, more enduring. We will not mourn over the loss of simplicity, if we have got instead souls indurated by experience, disciplined, even by fall, to refuse the evil and to choose the good.

2. In the next place, it is wise to forget our days of

youth. Up to a certain period of life it is the tendency of man to look forwards. There is a marvellous prodigality with which we throw away our present happiness when we are young, which belongs to those who feel that they are rich in happiness, and never expect to be bankrupts. It almost seems one of the signatures of our immortality that we squander time as if there were a dim consciousness that we are in possession of an eternity of it; but as we arrive at middle age, it is the tendency of man to look back. To a man of middle life, existence is no longer a dream, but a reality. He has not much more new to look forward to, for the character of his life is generally fixed by that time. His profession, his home, his occupations, will be for the most part what they are now. He will make few new acquaintances—no new friends. It is the solemn thought connected with middle age that life's last business is begun in earnest; and it is then, midway between the cradle and the grave, that a man begins to look back and marvel with a kind of remorseful feeling that he let the days of youth go by so half enjoyed. It is the pensive autumn feeling,—it is the sensation of half sadness that we experience when the longest day of the year is past, and every day that follows is shorter, and the lights fainter, and the feebler shadows tell that nature is hastening with gigantic footsteps to her winter grave. So does man look back upon his youth. When the first grey hairs become visible,—when the unwelcome truth fastens itself upon the mind, that a man is no longer going up the hill, but down, and that the sun is already westering, he looks back on things behind. Now this is a natural feeling, but is it the high Christian tone of feeling? In the spirit of this verse, we may assuredly answer, No. We who have an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, what have we to do with things past? When we were children we thought as children. But now there lies before us manhood, with its earnest work: and then old age, and then the grave, and then home. And so manhood in the Christian life is a better thing than boyhood, because it is a riper thing; and

old age ought to be a brighter, and a calmer, and a more serene thing than manhood. There is a second youth for man, better and holier than his first, if he will look on and not back. There is a peculiar simplicity of heart and a touching singleness of purpose in Christian old age, which has ripened gradually and not fitfully. It is then that to the wisdom of the serpent is added the harmlessness of the dove; it is then that to the firmness of manhood is joined almost the gentleness of womanhood; it is then that the somewhat austere and sour character of growing strength, moral and intellectual, mellows into the rich ripeness of an old age, made sweet and tolerant by experience; it is then that man returns to first principles. There comes a love more pure and deep than the boy could ever feel; there comes a conviction, with a strength beyond that which the boy could ever know, that the earliest lesson of life is infinite, Christ is all in all.

3. Again; it is wise to forget past errors. There is a kind of temperament which, when indulged, greatly hinders growth in real godliness. It is that rueful, repentant, self-accusing temper, which is always looking back, and microscopically observing how that which is done might have been better done. Something of this we ought to have. A Christian ought to feel always that he has partially failed, but that ought not to be the only feeling. Faith ought ever to be a sanguine, cheerful thing; and perhaps in practical life we could not give a better account of faith than by saying, that it is amidst much failure having the heart to try again. Our best deeds are marked by imperfection; but if they really were our best, "forget the things that are behind"—we shall do better next time.

Under this head we include all those mistakes which belong to our circumstances. We can all look back to past life and see mistakes that have been made, to a certain extent, perhaps, irreparable ones. We can see where our education was fatally misdirected. The profession chosen for you perhaps was not the fittest, or you are out of place, and many things might have been better ordered. Now,

on this apostolic principle, it is wise to forget all that. It is not by regretting what is irreparable that true work is to be done, but by making the best of what we are. It is not by complaining that we have not the right tools, but by using well the tools we have. What we are, and where we are, is God's providential arrangement—God's doing, though it may be man's misdoing; and the manly and the wise way is to look your disadvantages in the face, and see what can be made out of them. Life, like war, is a series of mistakes, and he is not the best Christian nor the best general who makes the fewest false steps. Poor mediocrity may secure that; but he is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes. Forget mistakes: organize victory out of mistakes.

Finally; Past guilt lies behind us, and is well forgotten. There is a way in which even sin may be banished from the memory. If a man looks forward to the evil he is going to commit, and satisfies himself that it is inevitable, and so treats it lightly, he is acting as a fatalist. But if a man partially does this, looking backward, feeling that sin when it is past has become part of the history of God's universe, and is not to be wept over for ever, he only does that which the Giver of the Gospel permits him to do. Bad as the results have been in the world of making light of sin, those of brooding over it too much have been worse. Remorse has done more harm than even hardihood. It was remorse which fixed Judas in an unalterable destiny; it was remorse which filled the monasteries for ages with men and women whose lives became useless to their fellow-creatures; it is remorse which so remembers bygone faults as to paralyze the energies for doing Christ's work; for when you break a Christian's spirit, it is all over with progress. Oh! we want everything that is hopeful and encouraging for our work, for God knows it is not an easy one. And therefore it is that the Gospel comes to the guiltiest of us all at the very outset with the inspiring news of pardon. You remember how Christ treated sin. Sin of oppression and hypocrisy indignantly, but sin of frailty—"'Hath no man condemned

thee?' 'No man, Lord.' 'Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more.'" As if He would bid us think more of what we may be than of what we have been. There was the wisdom of life in the proverb with which the widow of Tekoah pleaded for the restoration of Absalom from banishment before David. Absalom had slain his brother Amnon. Well, Amnon was dead before his time; but the severity of revenge could never bring him back again. "We must all die," said the wise woman, "and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." Christian brethren, *do not stop too long to weep over spilt water.* Forget your guilt, and wait to see what eternity has to say to it. You have other work to do now.

So let us work out the spirit of the apostle's plan. Innocence, youth, success, error, guilt—let us forget them all.

> Not backward are our glances bent,
> But onwards to our Father's home.

In conclusion, remember Christian progress is only possible in Christ. It is a very lofty thing to be a Christian; for a Christian is a man who is restoring God's likeness to his character; and therefore the apostle calls it here a high calling. High as heaven is the calling wherewith we are called. But this very height makes it seem impracticable. It is natural to say—all that was well enough for one so transcendently gifted as Paul to hope for: but I am no gifted man—I have no iron strength of mind—I have no sanguine hopefulness of character—I am disposed to look on the dark side of things—I am undetermined, weak, vacillating; and then I have a whole army of passions and follies to contend with. We have to remind such men of one thing they have forgotten. It is the high calling of God if you will; but it is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. What the world calls virtue is a name and a dream without Christ. The foundation of all human excellence must be laid deep in the blood of the Redeemer's cross, and in the power of His Resurrection. First let a

man know that all his past is wrong and sinful; then let him fix his eye on the love of God in Christ loving him, even him, the guilty one. Is there no strength in that? no power in the knowledge that all that is gone by is gone, and that a fresh clear future is open? It is not the progress of virtue that God asks for, but progress in saintliness, empowered by hope and love.

Lastly, let each man put this question to himself, "Dare I look on?" With an earnest Christian, it is "reaching forth to those things which are before." Progress ever. And then just as we go to rest in this world tired, and wake up fresh and vigorous in the morning, so does the Christian go to sleep in the world's night, weary with the work of life, and then on the resurrection-day he wakes in his second and his brighter morning. It is well for a believer to look on.—Dare you? Remember, out of Christ, it is not wisdom, but madness to look on. You must look back, for the longest and the best day is either past or passing. It will be winter soon—desolate, uncheered, hopeless winter—old age, with its dreariness and its disappointment, and its querulous broken-heartedness; and there is no second spring for you —no resurrection morning of blessedness to dawn on the darkness of your grave. God has only one method of salvation, the Cross of Christ. God can have only one; for the Cross of Christ means death to evil, life to good. There is no other way to salvation but that, for that in itself is, and alone is, salvation. Out of Christ, therefore, it is woe to the man who reaches forth to the things which are before. To such I say—My unhappy brethren, Omnipotence itself cannot change the darkness of your destiny.

THE CHRISTIAN AIM AND MOTIVE

MATTHEW v. 48.—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

THERE are two erroneous views held respecting the character of the Sermon on the Mount. The first may be called an error of worldly-minded men, the other an error of mistaken religionists. Worldly-minded men—men, that is, in whom the devotional feeling is but feeble—are accustomed to look upon morality as the whole of religion; and they suppose that the Sermon on the Mount was designed only to explain and enforce correct principles of morality. It tells of human duties and human proprieties, and an attention to these, they maintain, is the only religion which is required by it. Strange, my Christian brethren, that men, whose lives are least remarkable for superhuman excellence, should be the very men to refer most frequently to those sublime comments on Christian principle, and should so confidently conclude from thence, that themselves are right and all others are wrong. Yet so it is.

The other is an error of mistaken religionists. They sometimes regard the Sermon on the Mount as if it were a collection of moral precepts, and consequently, strictly speaking, not Christianity at all. To them it seems as if the chief value, the chief intention, of the discourse was to show the breadth and spirituality of the requirements of the law of Moses—its chief religious significance, to show the utter impossibility of fulfilling the law, and thus to lead to the necessary inference that justification must be by faith alone. And so they would not scruple to assert that, in the highest sense of that term, it is not Christianity at all, but only preparatory to it—a kind of spiritual Judaism; and that the higher and more developed principles of Christianity are to be found in the writings of the apostles. Before we proceed further, we would remark here that it seems extremely

startling to say that He who came to this world expressly to preach the Gospel, should, in the most elaborate of all His discourses, omit to do so: it is indeed something more than startling, it is absolutely revolting, to suppose that the letters of those who spoke *of* Christ should contain a more perfectly-developed, freer and fuller Christianity than is to be found in Christ's own words.

Now you will observe that these two parties, so opposed to each other in their general religious views, are agreed in this—that the Sermon on the Mount is nothing but morality. The man of the world says—"It is morality only, and that is the whole of religion." The mistaken religionist says—"It is morality only, not the entire essence of Christianity." In opposition to both these views, we maintain that the Sermon on the Mount contains the sum and substance of Christianity—the very chief matter of the gospel of our Redeemer. It is not, you will observe, a pure and spiritualized Judaism; it is contrasted with Judaism again and again by Him who spoke it. Quoting the words of Moses, he affirmed, "So was it spoken by them of old time, but *I say unto you*—" For example, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." That is Judaism. "But I say unto you swear not at all, but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay." That is Christianity. And that which is the essential peculiarity of this Christianity lies in these two things. First of all, that the morality which it teaches is *disinterested* goodness—goodness not for the sake of the blessing that follows it, but for its own sake, and because it is right. "Love your enemies," is the Gospel precept. Why?—Because if you love them you shall be blessed; and if you do not, cursed? No; but "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of"—that is, may be like—"your Father which is in Heaven." The second essential peculiarity of Christianity—and this, too, is an essential peculiarity of this Sermon—is, that it teaches and enforces the law of self-sacrifice. "If

thy right eye offend thee pluck it out; if thy right hand offend thee cut it off." This, brethren, is the law of self-sacrifice—the very law and spirit of the blessed Cross of Christ.

How deeply and essentially Christian, then, this Sermon on the Mount is, we shall understand if we are enabled in any measure to reach the meaning and spirit of the single passage which I have taken as my text. It tells two things —the Christian aim and the Christian motive.

1st. The Christian aim—perfection. 2nd. The Christian motive—because it is Godlike and right to be perfect.

I. We will in the first place take the first of these.

The Christian aim is this—to be perfect. "Be ye therefore perfect." Now distinguish this, I pray you, from mere worldly morality. It is not conformity to a creed that is here required, but aspiration after a *state*. It is not demanded of us to perform a number of duties, but to yield obedience to a certain spiritual law. But let us endeavour to explain this more fully. What is the meaning of this expression, "Be ye perfect?" Why is it that in this discourse, instead of being commanded to perform religious duties, we are commanded to think of being like God? Will not that inflame our pride, and increase our natural vainglory? Now the nature and possibility of human perfection, what it is and how it is possible, are both contained in one single expression in the text. "Even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." The relationship between father and son implies consanguinity, likeness, similarity of character and nature. God *made* the insect, the stone, the lily; but God is not the Father of the caterpillar, the lily, or the stone. When, therefore, God is said to be our Father, something more is implied in this than that God created man. And so when the Son of Man came proclaiming the fact that we are the children of God, it was in the truest sense a revelation. He told us that the nature of God resembles the nature of man, that love in God is not a mere figure of speech, but means the same thing as love in us, and that divine anger is the same thing as human anger

divested of its emotions and imperfections. Therefore, when we are commanded to be like God, it implies that God has that nature of which we have already the germs. And this has been taught by the incarnation of the Redeemer. Things absolutely dissimilar in their nature cannot mingle. Water cannot coalesce with fire—water cannot mix with oil. If, then, humanity and divinity were united in the person of the Redeemer, it follows that there must be something kindred between the two, or else the incarnation had been impossible. So that the incarnation is the realization of man's perfection.

But let us examine more deeply this assertion, that *our* nature is kindred with that of God—for if man has not a nature kindred to God's, then a demand such as that, "Be ye the children of, that is like, God," is but a mockery of man. We say then, in the first place, that in the truest sense of the word man can be a creator. The beaver *makes* its hole, the bee *makes* its cell; man has the power of *creating*. The mason *makes*, the architect *creates*. In the same sense that we say God created the universe, we say that man is also a creator. The creation of the universe was the Eternal Thought taking reality. And thought taking expression is also a creation. Whenever, therefore, there is a living thought shaping itself in word or in stone, there is there a creation. And, therefore it is, that the simplest effort of what we call genius is prized infinitely more than the most elaborate performances which are done by mere workmanship, and for this reason: that the one is produced by an effort of power which we share with the beaver and the bee, that of *making*, and the other by a faculty and power which man alone shares with God.

Here, however, you will observe another difficulty. It will be said at once—there is something in this comparison of man with God which looks like blasphemy, because one is finite and the other infinite—man is bounded, God boundless; and to speak of resemblance and kindred between these two, is to speak of resemblance and kin-

dred between two natures essentially different. But this is precisely the argument which is brought by the Socinians against the doctrine of the incarnation; and we are bound to add that the Socinian argument is right, unless there be the similarity of which we have been speaking. Unless there be something in man's nature which truly and properly partakes of the divine nature, there could be no incarnation, and the demand for perfection would be a mockery and an impossibility.

Let us then endeavour to find out the evidences of this infinitude in the nature of man. First of all, we find it in this—that the desires of man are for something boundless and unattainable. Thus speaks our Lord—"What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Every schoolboy has heard the story of the youthful prince who enumerated one by one the countries he meant to conquer year after year; and when the enumeration was completed, was asked what he meant to do when all those victories were achieved, and he replied—to sit down, to be happy, to take his rest. But then came the ready rejoinder—why not do so now? But it is not every schoolboy who has paused to consider the folly of the question. He who asked his son why he did not at once take the rest which it was his ultimate purpose to enjoy, knew not the immensity and nobility of the human soul. He could not *then* take his rest and be happy. As long as one realm remained unconquered, so long rest was impossible; he would weep for fresh worlds to conquer. And thus, that which was spoken by our Lord of our earthly gratification, is true of all—"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." The boundless, endless, infinite void in the soul of man can be satisfied with nothing but God. Satisfaction lies not in *having*, but in *being*. There is no satisfaction even in *doing*. Man cannot be satisfied with his own performances. When the righteous young ruler came to Christ, and declared that in reference to the life gone by, he had kept all the commandments and fulfilled all the duties required by the

Law, still came the question—"What lack I yet?" The Scribes and Pharisees were the strictest observers of the ceremonies of the Jewish religion, "touching the righteousness which is by the Law" they were blameless, but yet they wanted something more than that, and they were found on the brink of Jordan imploring the baptism of John, seeking after a new and higher state than they had yet attained to,—a significant proof that man cannot be satisfied with his own works. And again, there is not one of us who has ever been satisfied with his own performances. There is no man, whose doings are worth anything, who has not felt that he has not yet done that which he feels himself able to do. While he was doing it, he was kept up by the spirit of hope; but when done, the thing seemed to him worthless. And therefore it is that the author cannot read his own book again, nor the sculptor look with pleasure upon his finished work. With respect to one of the greatest of all modern sculptors, we are told that he longed for the termination of his earthly career, for this reason—that he had been satisfied with his own performance: satisfied for the first time in his life. And this expression of his satisfaction was but equivalent to saying that he had reached the goal, beyond which there could be no progress. This impossibility of being satisfied with our own performances is one of the strongest proofs of our immortality—a proof of that perfection towards which we shall for ever tend, but which we can never attain.

A second trace of this infinitude in man's nature we find in the infinite capacities of the soul. This is true, intellectually and morally. With reference to our intellectual capacities, it would perhaps be more strictly correct to say that they are indefinite, rather than infinite; that is, we can affix to them no limit. For there is no man, however low his intellectual powers may be, who has not at one time or another felt a rush of thought, a glow of inspiration, which seemed to make all things possible, as if it were merely the effect of some imperfect organization which stood in the

way of his doing whatever he desired to do. With respect to our moral and spiritual capacities, we remark that they are not only indefinite, but absolutely infinite. Let that man answer who has ever truly and heartily loved another. That man knows what it is to partake of the infinitude of God. Literally, in the emphatic language of the Apostle John, he has felt his immortality—"God in him and he in God." For that moment, infinitude was to him not a name, but a reality. He entered into the infinite of time and space, which is not measured by days, or months, or years, but is alike boundless and eternal.

Again, we perceive a third trace of this infinitude in man, in the power which he possesses of giving up self. In this, perhaps more than in anything else, man may claim kindred with God. Nor is this power confined to the best of mankind, but is possessed, to some extent at least, by all. There is no man, how low soever he may be, who has not one or two causes or secrets, which no earthly consideration would induce him to betray. There is no man who does not feel towards one or two at least, in this world, a devotion which all the bribes of the universe would not be able to shake. We have heard the story of that degraded criminal who, when sentence of death was passed upon him, turned to his accomplice in guilt, in whose favour a verdict of acquittal was brought in, and in glorious self-forgetfulness exclaimed—"Thank God, *you* are saved!" The savage and barbarous Indian whose life has been one unbroken series of cruelty and crime, will submit to a slow, lingering, torturing death, rather than betray his country. Now, what shall we say to these things? Do they not tell of an indestructible something in the nature of man, of which the origin is divine?—the remains of a majesty which, though it may be sullied, can never be entirely lost?

Before passing on, let us observe that were it not for this conviction of the divine origin, and consequent perfectibility of our nature, the very thought of God would be painful to us. God is so great, so glorious, that the mind is over-

whelmed by, and shrinks from, the contemplation of His excellence, unless there comes the tender, ennobling thought that we are the children of God, who are to become like our Father in Heaven, whose blessed career it is to go on in an advance of love and duty towards Him, until we love Him as we are loved, and know Him almost as we are known.

II. We pass on now, in the second place, to consider the Christian motive—"Even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Brethren, worldly prudence, miscalled morality, says—"Be honest; you will find your gain in being so. Do right; you will be the better for it—even in this world you will not lose by it." The mistaken religionist only magnifies this on a large scale. "Your duty," he says, "is to save your soul. Give up this world to have the next. Lose *here*, that you may gain *hereafter*." Now, this is but prudence after all—it is but magnified selfishness, carried on into eternity,—none the more noble for being *eternal* selfishness. Now, in opposition to all such sentiments as these, thus speaks the Gospel—"Be ye perfect." Why? "Because your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Do right, because it is God-like and right so to do. Here, however, let us be understood. We do not mean to say that the Gospel ignores altogether the personal results of doing right. This would be unnatural—because God has linked together well-doing and blessedness. But we do say that this blessedness is not the motive which the Gospel gives us. It is true the Gospel says—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." But when these are made our motives—when we become meek in order that we may inherit here—then the promised enjoyment will not come. If we are merciful merely that we may ourselves obtain mercy, we shall not have that indwelling love of God which is the result and token of His forgiveness. Such was the law and such the example of our

Lord and Master. True it is that in the prosecution of the great work of redemption He had "respect to the recompense of reward." True it is He was conscious—how could He but be conscious—that when His work was completed He should be "glorified with that glory which He had with the Father before the world began;" but we deny that this was the *motive* which induced Him to undertake that work; and that man has a very mistaken idea of the character of the Redeemer, and understands but little of His spirit, who has so mean an opinion of Him as to suppose that it was any consideration of personal happiness and blessedness which led the Son of God to die. "For this end was He born, and for this end came He into the world to bear witness unto the Truth," and "to finish the work which was given Him to do."

If we were asked, Can you select one text in which more than in any other this unselfish, disinterested feature comes forth, it should be this, "Love ye your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing again." This is the true spirit of Christianity—doing right disinterestedly, not from the hope of any personal advantage or reward, either temporal or spiritual, but entirely forgetting self, "hoping for nothing again." When that glorious philanthropist, whose whole life had been spent in procuring the abolition of the slave-trade, was demanded of by some systematic theologian whether in his ardour in this great cause he had not been neglecting his personal prospects, and endangering his own soul, this was his magnanimous reply—one of those which show the light of truth breaking through like an inspiration. He said, "I did not think about my own soul, I had no time to think about myself, I had forgotten all about my soul." The Christian is not concerned about his own happiness; he has not time to consider himself; he has not time to put that selfish question which the disciples put to their Lord when they were but half baptized with His spirit, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?"

In conclusion, we observe, there are two things which are

to be learnt from this passage. The first is this, that happiness is not our end and aim. It has been said, and has since been repeated as frequently as if it were an indisputable axiom, that "Happiness is our being's end and aim." Brethren, happiness is *not* our being's end and aim. The Christian's aim is perfection, not happiness, and every one of the sons of God must have something of that spirit which marked their Master; that holy sadness, that peculiar unrest, that high and lofty melancholy which belongs to a spirit which strives after heights to which it can never attain.

The second thing we have to learn is this, that on this earth there can be no rest for man. By rest we mean the attainment of a state beyond which there can be no change. Politically, morally, spiritually, there can be no rest for man here. In one country alone has that system been fully carried out which, conservative of the past, excludes all desire of progress and improvement for the future: but it is not to China that we should look for the perfection of human society. There is one ecclesiastical system which carries out the same spirit, looking rather to the Church of the past than to the Church of the future; but it is not in the Roman that we shall find the model of a Christian Church. In paradise it may have been right to be at rest, to desire no change, but ever since the Fall every system that tends to check the onward progress of mankind is fatally, radically, curelessly wrong. The motto on every Christian banner is "Forwards." There is no resting in the present, no satisfaction in the past.

The last thing we learn from this is the impossibility of obtaining that of which some men speak—the satisfaction of a good conscience. Some men write and speak as if the difference between the Christian and the worldly man was this, that in the one conscience is a self-reproaching hell, and in the other a self-congratulating heaven. Oh, brethren, is this the fact? Think you that the Christian goes home at night counting up the noble deeds done during the day, saying to himself, "Well done, good and faithful servant?"

Brethren, that habit of looking forwards to the future prevents all pride and self-righteousness, and makes our best and only rest and satisfaction to consist in contemplating the future which is bringing us nearer and nearer home. Our motto, therefore, must be that striking one of the Apostle Paul, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SPIRITUAL HARVEST

GAL. vi. 7. 8.—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

THERE is a close analogy between the world of nature and the world of spirit. They bear the impress of the same hand; and hence the principles of nature and its laws are the types and shadows of the Invisible. Just as two books, though on different subjects, proceeding from the same pen, manifest indications of the thought of one mind, so the worlds visible and invisible are two books, written by the same finger, and governed by the same Idea. Or rather, they are but one Book, separated into two only by the narrow range of our ken. For it is impossible to study the universe at all without perceiving that it is one system. Begin with what science you will, as soon as you get beyond the rudiments, you are constrained to associate it with another.

You cannot study agriculture long without finding that it absorbs into itself meteorology and chemistry: sciences run into one another till you get the "connexion of the

sciences;" and you begin to learn that one Divine Idea connects the whole in one system of perfect Order.

It was upon this principle that Christ taught. Truths come forth from His lips not stated simply on authority, but based on the analogy of the universe. His human mind, in perfect harmony with the Divine Mind with which it mixed, discerned the connexion of things, and read the Eternal Will in the simplest laws of Nature. For instance, if it were a question whether God would give His Spirit to them that asked, it was not replied to by a truth revealed on His *authority;* the answer was derived from facts lying open to all men's observation. "Behold the fowls of the air"—"behold the lilies of the field"—learn from them the answer to your question. A principle was there. God supplies the wants which He has created. He feeds the ravens—He clothes the lilies—He will feed with His Spirit the craving spirits of His children.

It was on this principle of analogy that St. Paul taught in this text. He tells us that there is a law in nature according to which success is proportioned to the labour spent upon the work. In kind and in degree—success is attained in kind; *e.g.*, he who has sowed his field with beechmast does not receive a plantation of oaks: a literary education is not the road to distinction in arms, but to success in letters: years spent on agriculture do not qualify a man to be an orator, but they make him a skilful farmer. Success, again, is proportioned to labour in degree: because ordinarily, as is the amount of seed sown, so is the harvest: he who studies much will know more than he who studies little. In almost all departments it is "the diligent hand which maketh rich."

The keen eye of Paul discerned this principle reaching far beyond what is seen, into the spiritual realm which is unseen. As tare-seed comes up tares, and wheat-seed wheat, and as the crop in both cases is in proportion to two conditions, the labour and the quantity committed to the ground,—so in things spiritual, too, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Not something else, but "*that.*"

The proportion holds in kind—it holds too in degree, in spiritual things as in natural. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." If we could understand and rightly expound that principle, we should be saved from much of the disappointment and surprise which come from extravagant and unreasonable expectations. I shall try first to elucidate the principle which these verses contain, and then examine the two branches of the principle.

I. The *principle* is this, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

There are two kinds of good possible to men: one enjoyed by our animal being, the other felt and appreciated by our spirits. Every man understands more or less the difference between these two: between prosperity and well-doing: between indulgence and nobleness: between comfort and inward peace: between pleasure and striving after perfection: between happiness and blessedness. These are two kinds of Harvest; and the labour necessary for them respectively is of very different kinds. The labour which procures the harvest of the one has no tendency to secure the other.

We will not depreciate the advantages of this world. It is foolish and unreal to do so. Comfort, affluence, success, freedom from care, rank, station—these are in their real way goods: only, the labour bestowed upon them does not procure one single blessing that is spiritual.

On the other hand, the seed which is sown for a spiritual harvest has no tendency whatever to procure temporal well-being. Let us see what are the laws of the sowing and reaping in this department. Christ has declared them: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (with righteousness.)" "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." You observe—the beatific vision of the Almighty—fulness of righteousness—comfort. There is nothing earthly—spiritual

results for spiritual labour. It is not said that the pure in heart shall be made rich; nor that they who hunger after goodness shall be filled with bread; nor that they who mourn shall rise in life and obtain distinction. Each department has its own appropriate harvest—reserved exclusively to its own method of sowing.

Everything in this world has its price, and the price buys that, not something else. Every harvest demands its own preparation, and that preparation will not produce another sort of harvest. Thus, *e.g.*, you cannot have at once the soldier's renown and the quiet of a recluse's life. The soldier pays his price for his glory—he sows and reaps. His price is risk of life and limb, nights spent on the hard ground, a weather-beaten constitution. If you will not pay that price, you cannot have what he has—military reputation. You cannot enjoy the statesman's influence together with freedom from public notoriety. If you sensitively shrink from that, you must give up influence; or else pay his price, the price of a thorny pillow, unrest, the chance of being to-day a nation's idol, to-morrow the people's execration. You cannot have the store of information possessed by the student, and enjoy robust health: pay his price, and you have his reward. His price is an emaciated frame, a debilitated constitution, a transparent hand, and the rose taken out of the sunken cheek. To expect these opposite things: a soldier's glory and quiet—a statesman's renown and peace—the student's prize and rude health, would be to mock God, to reap what has not been sowed.

Now the mistakes men make, and the extravagant expectation in which they indulge, are these:—They sow for earth, and expect to win spiritual blessings; or they sow to the Spirit, and then wonder that they have not a harvest of the good things of earth. In each case they complain, What have I done to be treated so?

The unreasonableness of all this appears the moment we have understood the conditions contained in this principle, "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap."

It is a common thing to hear sentimental wonderings about the unfairness of the distribution of things here. The unprincipled get on in life: the saints are kept back. The riches and rewards of life fall to the lot of the undeserving. The rich man has his good things, and Lazarus his evil things. Whereupon it is taken for granted that there must be a future life to make this fair: that if there were none, the constitution of this world would be unjust. That is, that because a man who has sown to the spirit does not reap to the flesh here, he will hereafter; that the meed of well-doing must be somewhere in the universe the same kind of recompense which the rewards of the unprincipled were here, comfort, abundance, physical enjoyment, or else all is wrong.

But if you look into it, the balance is perfectly adjusted even here. God has made His world much better than you and I could make it. Everything reaps its own harvest, every act has its own reward. And before you covet the enjoyment which another possesses, you must first calculate the cost at which it was procured.

For instance, the religious tradesman complains that his honesty is a hindrance to his success: that the tide of custom pours into the doors of his less scrupulous neighbours in the same street, while he himself waits for hours idle. My brother! do you think that God is going to reward honour, integrity, high-mindedness, with this world's coin? Do you fancy that He will pay spiritual excellence with plenty of custom? Now, consider the price that man has paid for his success. Perhaps mental degradation and inward dishonour. His advertisements are all deceptive. His treatment of his workmen tyrannical: his cheap prices made possible by inferior articles. Sow that man's seed, and you will reap that man's harvest. Cheat, lie, advertise, be unscrupulous in your assertions, custom will come to you. But if the price is too dear, let him have his harvest, and take yours; yours is a clear conscience, a pure mind, rectitude within and without—Will you part with that for his? Then why do you com-

plain? He has paid his price, you do not choose to pay it.

Again, it is not an uncommon thing to see a man rise from insignificance to sudden wealth by speculation. Within the last ten or twenty years, England has gazed on many such a phenomenon. In this case, as in spiritual things, the law seems to hold: He that hath, to him shall be given. Tens of thousands soon increase and multiply to hundreds of thousands. His doors are besieged by the rich and great. Royalty banquets at his table, and nobles court his alliance. Whereupon some simple Christian is inclined to complain: "How strange that so much prosperity should be the lot of mere cleverness!" Well, are these really God's chief blessings? Is it for such as these you serve Him? And would these indeed satisfy your soul? Would you have God reward His saintliest with these gauds and gewgaws—all this trash, rank, and wealth, and equipages, and plate, and courtship from the needy great? Call you that the heaven of the holy? Compute now what was paid for that. The price that merchant prince paid, perhaps with the blood of his own soul, was shame and guilt. The price he is paying now is perpetual dread of detection: or worse still, the hardness which can laugh at detection: or one deep, lower yet, the low and grovelling soul which can be satisfied with these things as a Paradise, and ask no higher. He has reaped enjoyment—yes, and he has sown, too, the seed of infamy. It is all fair. Count the cost. "He that saveth his life shall lose it." Save your life if you like: but do not complain if you lose your nobler life—yourself: win the whole world: but remember you do it by losing your own soul. Every sin must be paid for: every sensual indulgence is a harvest, the price for which is so much ruin for the soul. "*God is not mocked.*"

Once more, Religious men in every profession are surprised to find that many of its avenues are closed to them. The conscientious churchman complains that his delicate scruples, or his bold truthfulness, stand in the

way of his preferment; while another man, who conquers his scruples, or softens the eye of truth, rises, and sits down a mitred peer in Parliament. The honourable lawyer feels that his practice is limited, while the unprincipled practitioner receives all he loses; and the Christian physician feels sore and sad at perceiving that charlatanism succeeds in winning employment; or, if not charlatanism, at least that affability and courtly manners take the place that is due to superior knowledge. Let such men take comfort, and judge fairly. Popularity is one of the things of an earthly harvest for which quite earthly qualifications are required. I say not always dishonourable qualifications: but a certain flexibility of disposition—a certain courtly willingness to sink obnoxious truths, and adapt ourselves to the prejudices of the minds of others: a certain adroitness at catching the tone of those with whom we are. Without some of these things no man can be popular in any profession. But you have resolved to be a liver—a doer—a champion of the truth. Your ambition is to be pure in the last recesses of the mind. You have your reward: A soul upright and manly—a fearless bearing, that dreads to look no man in the face—a willingness to let men search you through and through, and defy them to see any difference between what you seem and what you are. Now, your price—your price is dislike. The price of being true is the Cross. The warrior of the truth must not expect success. What have you to do with popularity? Sow for it, and you will have it. But if you wish for it, or wish for peace, you have mistaken your calling—you must not be a teacher of the truth—you must not cut prejudice against the grain—you must leave medical, legal, theological truth to harder and nobler men, who are willing to take the martyr's cross and win the martyr's crown. This is the mistake men make. They expect both harvests, paying only one price. They would be blessed with goodness and prosperity at once. They would have that on which they bestowed no labour. They take sinful pleasure, and think it very hard that they

must pay for it in agony, and, worse than agony, souls deteriorated. They would monopolize heaven in their souls, and the world's prizes at the same time. This is to expect to come back, like Joseph's brethren from the land of plenty, with the corn in their sacks, and the money returned, too, in their sacks' mouths. No, no; it will not do. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." Reap *what* you have sown. If you sow the wind, do not complain if your harvest is the whirlwind. If you sow to the Spirit, be content with a spiritual reward—invisible—within—more life and higher life.

II. Next, the two branches of the application of this principle.

First: He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. There are two kinds of life: one of the flesh—another of the spirit. Amidst the animal and selfish desires of our nature, there is a Voice which clearly speaks of Duty: Right: Perfection. This is the Spirit of Deity in man—it is the life of God in the soul. This is the evidence of our divine parentage.

But there is a double temptation to live the other life instead of this. First, the desires of our animal nature are *keener* than those of our spiritual. The cry of Passion is louder than the calm voice of Duty. Next, the reward in the case of our sensitive nature is given *sooner*. It takes a less time to amass a fortune than to become heavenly-minded. It costs less to indulge an appetite than it does to gain the peace of lulled passion. And hence, when men feel that, for the spiritual blessing, the bread must be cast upon the waters which shall not be found until after many days (scepticism whispers "never!"), it is quite intelligible why they choose the visible and palpable instead of the invisible advantage, and plan for an immediate harvest rather than a distant one.

The other life is that of the flesh. The "flesh" includes all the desires of our unrenewed nature—the harmless as well as sinful. Any labour, therefore, which is bounded by

present well-being is *sowing* to the flesh: whether it be the gratification of an immediate impulse, or the long-contrived plan reaching forward over many years. Sowing to the flesh includes therefore,

1. Those who live in open riot. He sows to the flesh who pampers its unruly animal appetites. Do not think that I speak contemptuously of our animal nature, as if it were not human and sacred. The lowest feelings of our nature become sublime by being made the instruments of our nobler emotions. Love, self-command, will elevate them all: and to ennoble and purify, not to crush them, is the long, slow work of Christian life. Christ, says St. Paul, is the Saviour of the *Body*. But if, instead of subduing these to the life of the spirit, a man gives to them the rein and even the spur, the result is not difficult to foresee. There are men who do this. They "make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." They whet the appetites by indulgence. They whip the jaded senses to their work. Whatever the constitutional bias may be, anger, intemperance, epicurism, indolence, desire, there are societies, conversations, scenes, which supply fuel for the flame, as well as opposite ones which cut off the nutriment. Now to indulge in these, knowing the result, is to foster the desire which brings forth the sin that ends in death. This is "sowing to the flesh."

If there be one to whom these words which I have used, veiled in the proprieties due to delicate reserve, are not without meaning, from this sentence of God's word let him learn his doom. He is looking forward to a harvest wherein he may reap the fruit of his present anticipations. And he shall reap it. He shall have his indulgence—he shall enjoy his guilty rapture—he shall have his unhallowed triumph: and the boon companions of his pleasures shall award him the meed of their applause. He has sown the seed: and in fair requital he shall have his harvest. It is all fair. He shall enjoy. But tarry awhile: the law hath yet another hold upon him. This deep law of the whole universe goes further. He has sown to the flesh, and of the flesh he

has reaped pleasure: he has sown to the flesh, and of the flesh he shall reap corruption. That is, in his case, the ruin of the soul. It is an awful thing to see a soul in ruins: like a temple which once was fair and noble, but now lies overthrown, matted with ivy, weeds, and tangled briers, among which things noisome crawl and live. He shall reap the harvest of disappointment—the harvest of bitter, useless remorse. The crime of sense is avenged by sense, which wears by time. He shall have the worm that gnaws, and the fire that is not quenched. He shall reap the fruit of long-indulged desires, which have become tyrannous at last, and constitute him his own tormentor. His harvest is a soul in flames, and the tongue that no drop can cool. Passions that burn, and appetites that crave, when the power of enjoyment is gone. He has sowed to the flesh. "God is not mocked." The man reaps.

2. There is a less gross way of sowing to the flesh. There are men of sagacity and judgment in the affairs of this life, whose penetration is almost intuitive in all things where the step in question involves success or failure here. They are those who are called in the parable the children of this world, wise in their generation. They moralize and speculate about eternity: but do not plan for it. There is no seed sown for an invisible harvest. It they think they have sown for such a harvest, they might test themselves by the question, What they would lose if there were to be no eternity? For the children of God, so far as earth is concerned, "If in this life only they have hope in Christ, then are they of all men most miserable." But *they*—these sagacious, prudent men of this world—they have their reward. What have they ventured, given up, sacrificed, which is all lost for ever, if this world be all? What have they buried like seed in the ground, lost for ever, if there be no eternity?

Now we do not say these men are absolutely wicked. We distinguish between their sowing to the flesh, and the sowing of these profligates last spoken of. All we say is, there is "corruption" written on their harvest. It was for

earth: and with earth it perishes. It may be the labour of the statesman, planning, like the Roman of old, the government and order of the kingdoms of the earth: or that of the astronomer, weighing suns, prescribing rules of return to comets, and dealing with things above earth in space, but unspiritual still: or that of the son of a humbler laboriousness, whose work is merely to provide for a family: or, lastly, the narrower range of the man of pleasure, whose chief care is where he shall spend the next season, in what metropolis, or which watering-place, or how best enjoy the next entertainment. Objects more or less harmless all. But they end. The pyramid crumbles into dust at last. The mighty empire of the eternal city breaks into fragments which disappear. The sowers for earth *have* their harvest here. Success in their schemes—quiet intellectual enjoyment—exemption from pain and loss—the fruits of worldly-wise sagacity. And that is all. "When the breath goeth forth, they return to their dust, and all their thoughts perish." The grave is not to them the gate of paradise, but simply the impressive mockery which the hand of death writes upon that body for which they lived, and with which all is gone. They reap corruption, for all they have toiled for decays!

Ye that lead the life of respectable worldliness! let these considerations arrest your indifference to the gospel. You have sown for earth—Well. And then—what? Hear the gospel. A Saviour whose Sacrifice is the world's life—whose death is the law of life: from whose resurrection streams a Spirit which can change carnal into spiritual men—whose whole existence, reflecting God, was the utterance of the Divine truth and rule of heavenly life, the blessedness of giving—To live so, and to believe so, is to sow to the Spirit.

Lastly,—*Sowing to the Spirit.* "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

What is meant by sowing to the Spirit here is plain. "Let us not be weary in well-doing," says the apostle directly after: "for in due season we shall reap if we faint

not." *Well-doing:* not faith: but works of goodness, were the sowing that he spoke of.

There is proclaimed here the rewardableness of works. So in many other passages: "Abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." "Laying up a good foundation for the time to come," was the reason alleged for charging rich men to be willing to give—and so all through. There is an irreversible principle. The amount of harvest is proportioned to the seed sown exactly. There are degrees of glory. The man who gives out of his abundance has one blessing. She who gives the mite, all she had, even all her living, has another, quite different. The rectitude of this principle, and what it is, will be plainer from the following considerations.

1. The harvest is Life Eternal. But Eternal Life here does not simply mean a life that lasts for ever. That is the destiny of the *Soul:* all souls, bad as well as good. But the bad do not enter into this "Eternal life." It is not simply the duration, but the quality of the life which constitutes its character of Eternal. A spirit may live for ever, yet not enter into this. And a man may live but for five minutes the life of Divine benevolence, or desire for perfectness: in those five minutes he has entered into the life which is Eternal, never fluctuates, but is the same unalterably for ever, in the Life of God. *This* is the Reward.

2. The reward is not arbitrary, but natural. God's rewards and God's punishments are all natural. Distinguish between arbitrary and natural. Death is an arbitrary punishment for forgery: it might be changed for transportation. It is not naturally connected. It depends upon the will of the law-maker. But trembling nerves are the direct and natural results of intemperance. They are in the order of nature the results of wrong-doing. The man reaps *what* he has sown. Similarly in rewards. If God gave riches in return for humbleness, that would be an arbitrary connexion. He did give such a reward to Solomon. But when He gives Life Eternal, meaning by Life Eternal not duration of existence but heavenly quality of existence, as explained

already, it is all natural. The seed sown in the ground contains in itself the future harvest. The harvest is but the development of the germ of life in the seed. A holy act strengthens the inward holiness. It is a seed of life growing into more life. "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he reap." He that sows much, thereby becomes more conformed to God than he was before—in heart and spirit. That is his reward and harvest. And just as among the apostles, there was one whose spirit, attuned to love, made him emphatically the disciple whom Jesus loved, so shall there be some who, by previous discipline of the Holy Ghost, shall have more of His mind, and understand more of His love, and drink deeper of His joy than others—They that have sowed bountifully.

Every act done in Christ receives its exact and appropriate reward. They that are meek shall inherit the earth. They that are pure shall see God. They that suffer shall reign with Him. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever. They that receive a righteous man in the name of a righteous man—that is, because he is a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. Even the cup of cold water, given in the name of Christ, shall not lose its reward.

It will be therefore seen at once, Reward is not the result of merit. It is, in the order of grace, the natural consequence of well-doing. It is life becoming more life. It is the soul developing itself. It is the Holy Spirit of God in man, making itself more felt, and mingling more and more with his soul, felt more consciously, with an ever-increasing heaven. You reap what you sow—not something else—but that. An act of love makes the soul more loving. A deed of humbleness deepens humbleness. The thing reaped is the very thing sown, multiplied a hundredfold. You have sown a seed of life—you reap life.

FREEDOM BY THE TRUTH

JOHN viii. 32.—"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

IF these words were the only record we possessed of the Saviour's teaching, it may be that they would be insufficient to prove His personal Deity, but they would be enough to demonstrate the Divine Character of His mission.

Observe the greatness of the aim, and the wisdom of the means.

The aim was to make all men free. He saw around Him servitude in every form—man in slavery to man, and race to race: His own countrymen in bondage to the Romans —slaves both of Jewish and Roman masters, frightfully oppressed: men trembling before priestcraft; and those who were politically and ecclesiastically free, in worse bondage still, the rich and rulers slaves to their own passions.

Conscious of His inward Deity and of His Father's intentions, He, without hurry, without the excitement which would mark the mere earthly Liberator, calmly said, "Ye shall be free."

See, next, the peculiar wisdom of the means.

The craving for liberty was not new—it lies deep in human nature. Nor was the promise of satisfying it new. Empirics, charlatans, demagogues had promised, and men who were not charlatans nor demagogues, in vain.

1. First they had tried by force. Wherever force has been used on the side of freedom we honour it; the names which we pronounce in boyhood with enthusiasm are those of the liberators of nations and the vindicators of liberty. Israel had had such: Joshua—the Judges—Judas Maccabæus. Had the Son of God willed so to come, even on human data the success was certain. I wave the truth of His inward Deity: of His miraculous power: of His power

to summon to His will more than twelve legions of angels. I only notice now that men's hearts were full of Him : ripe for revolt : and that at a single word of His, thrice three hundred thousand swords would have started from their scabbards.

But had He so come, one nation might have gained liberty ; not the race of man : moreover, the liberty would only have been independence of a foreign conqueror.

Therefore as a conquering king He did not come.

2. Again, it might have been attempted by legislative enactment. Perhaps only once has this been done successfully, and by a single effort. When the names of conquerors shall have been forgotten, and modern civilisation shall have become obsolete—when England's shall be ancient history, one act of hers will be remembered as a record of her greatness, that act by which in costly sacrifice she emancipated her slaves.

But one thing England could not do. She could give freedom—she could not fit for freedom, not make it lasting. The stroke of a monarch's pen will do the one—the discipline of ages is needed for the other. Give to-morrow a constitution to some feeble Eastern nation, or a horde of savages, and in half a century they will be subjected again.

Therefore the Son of Man did not come to free the world by legislation.

3. It might be done by civilisation. Civilisation does free—intellect equalizes. Every step of civilisation is a victory over some lower instinct. But civilisation contains within itself the elements of a fresh servitude. Man conquers the powers of nature and becomes in turn their slave. The workman is in bondage to the machinery which does his will : his hours, his wages, his personal habits determined by it. The rich man fills his house with luxuries, and cannot do without them. A highly civilised community is a very spectacle of servitude. Man is there a slave to dress, to hours, to manners, to conventions, to etiquette. Things contrived to make his life more easy become his masters.

Therefore Jesus did not talk of the progress of the species nor the growth of civilisation, He did not trust the world's hope of liberty to a right division of property. But He freed the inner man, that so the outer might become free too. "Ye shall know the truth, and the *truth* shall make you free."

I. The truth that liberates.
II. The liberty which truth gives.

The truth which Christ taught was chiefly on these three points—God : Man : Immortality.

1. God. Blot out the thought of God, a Living Person, and life becomes mean, existence unmeaning, the universe dark, and resolve is left without a stay, aspiration and duty without a support.

The Son exhibited God as Love : and so that fearful bondage of the mind to the necessity of Fate was broken. A living Lord had made the world ; and its dark and unintelligible mystery meant good, not evil. He manifested Him as a spirit ; and if so, the only worship that could please Him must be a spirit's worship. Not by sacrifices is God pleased : nor by droned litanies and liturgies : nor by fawning and flattery : nor is His wrath bought off by blood. Thus was the chain of superstition rent asunder ; for superstition is wrong views of God, exaggerated or inadequate, and wrong conceptions of the way to please Him.

And so when the woman of Samaria brought the conversation to that old ecclesiastical question about consecrated buildings, whether on Mount Gerizim or on Mount Moriah God was the more acceptably adored, He cut the whole controversy short by the enunciation of a single truth : "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

2. Truth respecting man.

We are a mystery to ourselves. Go to any place where the nations have brought together their wealth and their inventions, and before the victories of mind you stand in reverence.

Then stop to look at the passing crowds who have attained that civilisation. Think of their low aims, their mean lives, their conformation only a little higher than that of brute creatures, and a painful sense of degradation steals upon you. So great, and yet so mean! And so of individuals. There is not one here whose feelings have not been deeper than we can fathom—nor one who would venture to tell out to his brother man the mean, base thoughts that have crossed his heart during the last hour. Now this riddle He solved—He looked on man as fallen, but magnificent in his ruin. We, catching that thought from Him, speak as He spoke. But none that were born of woman ever felt this or lived this like Him. Beneath the vilest outside he saw that—A human soul, capable of endless growth: and hence He treated with what for want of a better term we may call respect, all who approached Him: not because they were titled Rabbis, or rich Pharisees, but because they were men.

Here was a germ for freedom. It is not the shackle on the wrist that constitutes a slave—but the loss of self-respect—To be treated as degraded till he feels degraded—to be subjected to the lash till he believes that he deserves the lash: and liberty is to suspect and yet reverence self: to suspect the tendency which leaves us ever on the brink of fall: to reverence that within us which is allied to God, redeemed by God the Son, and made a temple of the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps we have seen an insect or reptile imprisoned in wood or stone. How it got there is unknown—how the particles of wood in years, or of stone in ages, grew round it, is a mystery, but not a greater mystery than the question of how man became incarcerated in evil. At last the day of emancipation came. The axe stroke was given: and the light came in, and the warmth: and the gauze wings expanded, and the eye looked bright: and the living Thing stepped forth, and you saw that there was not its home. Its home was the free air of heaven.

Christ taught that truth of the human soul. It is not in

its right place. It never is in its right place in the dark prison-house of sin. Its home is freedom, and the breath of God's life.

3. Truth respecting immortality.

He taught that this life is not all: that it is only a miserable state of human infancy. He taught that in words: by His life, and by His Resurrection.

This, again, was freedom. If there be a faith that cramps and enslaves the soul, it is the idea that this life is all. If there be one that expands and elevates, it is the thought of immortality: and this, observe, is something quite distinct from the selfish desire of happiness. It is not to enjoy, but to be that we long for. To enter into more and higher life: a craving which we can only part with when we sink below humanity, and forfeit it.

This was the martyrs' strength. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might attain a better Resurrection. In that hope, and the knowledge of that truth, they were free from the fear of pain and death.

II. The nature of the liberty which truth gives.

1. Political freedom.

It was our work, last Sunday, to show that Christianity does not directly interfere with political questions. But we should have only half done our work, if we had not also learned that, mediately and indirectly, it must influence them. Christ's gospel did not promise political freedom, yet it gave it: more surely than conqueror, reformer, patriot, that gospel will bring about a true liberty at last.

This, not by theories nor by schemes of constitutions, but by the revelations of Truths. God a Spirit: man His child: redeemed and sanctified. Before that spiritual equality, all distinctions between peer and peasant, monarch and labourer, privileged and unprivileged, vanish. A better man, or a wiser man than I, is in my presence, and I feel it a mockery to be reminded that I am his superior in rank.

Let us hold that truth: let us never weary of proclaiming it: and the truth shall make us free at last.

2. Mental independence.

Slavery is that which cramps powers. The worst slavery is that which cramps the noblest powers. Worse therefore than he who manacles the hands and feet, is he who puts fetters on the mind, and pretends to demand that men shall think, and believe, and feel thus and thus, because others so believed, and thought, and felt before.

In Judæa—life was become a set of forms, and religion a congeries of traditions. One living word from the lips of Christ, and the mind of the world was free.

Later, a mountain mass of superstition had gathered round the Church, atom by atom, and grain by grain. Men said that the soul was saved only by doing and believing what the priesthood taught. The heroes of the Reformation spoke. They said the soul of man is saved by the grace of God: a more credible hypothesis. Once more the mind of the world was free: and free by Truth.

There is a tendency always to think, in the masses—not what is true: but what is respectable, correct, orthodox, authorized, that we ask. Now, truth known and believed respecting God and man frees from this, by warning of individual responsibility. It comes partly from cowardice: partly from indolence: from habit: from imitation: from the uncertainty and darkness of all moral truths, and the dread of timid minds to plunge into the investigation of them. But responsibility is personal. It cannot be delegated to another, and thrown off upon a church. Before God, face to face, each soul must stand, to give account.

Do not, however, confound mental independence with mental pride. It may, it ought to coexist with the deepest humility. For that mind alone is free which, conscious ever of its own feebleness, feeling hourly its own liability to err, turning thankfully to light from whatever side it may come, does yet refuse to give up that right with which God has invested it, or to abrogate its own responsibility, and so, humbly, and even awfully, resolves to have an opinion, a judgment, a decision of its own.

3. Superiority to temptation.

It is not enough to define the liberty which Christ promises as freedom from sin. Many circumstances will exempt from sin which do not yet confer that liberty "Where the Spirit of the Lord is." Childhood, paralysis, ill health, the impotence of old age, may remove the capacity and even the desire of transgression; but the child, the paralytic, the old man, are not free through the truth.

Therefore, to this definition we must add, that one whom Christ liberates is free by his own will. It is not that he would, and cannot: but that he can, and will not. Christian liberty is right will, sustained by love, and made firm by faith in Christ.

This may be seen by considering the opposite of liberty—moral bondage. Go to the intemperate man in the morning, when his head aches, his hand trembles, his throat burns, and his whole frame is relaxed and unstrung: he is ashamed, hates his sin, would not do it. Go to him at night, when the power of habit is on him like a spell, and he obeys the mastery of his craving. He can use the language of Rom. vii.: "That which he would, he does not; but the evil that he hates, that does he." Observe, he is not in possession of a true self. It is not he, but sin which dwelleth in him, that does it. A power which is not himself, which is not he, commands him against himself. And that is Slavery.

This is a gross case, but in every more refined instance the slavery is just as real. Wherever a man would and cannot, there is servitude. He may be unable to control his expenditure, to rouse his indolence, to check his imagination. Well—he is not free. He may boast, as the Jews did, that he is Abraham's son, or any other great man's son: that he belongs to a free country: that he never was in bondage to any man; but free in the freedom of the Son he is not.

4. Superiority to Fear.

Fear enslaves, courage liberates—and that always. Whatever a man intensely dreads, that brings him into bondage, if it be above the fear of God, and the reverence of duty.

The apprehension of pain, the fear of death, the dread of the world's laugh, of poverty, or the loss of reputation, enslave alike.

From such fear Christ frees, and through the power of the truths I have spoken of. He who lives in the habitual contemplation of immortality cannot be in bondage to time, or enslaved by transitory temptations. I do not say will not. "He *cannot* sin," saith the Scripture, while that faith is living. He who feels his soul's dignity, knowing what he is and who, redeemed by God the Son, and freed by God the Spirit, cannot cringe, nor pollute himself, nor be mean. He who aspires to gaze undazzled on the intolerable brightness of that One before whom Israel veiled their faces, will scarcely quail before any earthly fear.

This is not picture-painting. This is not declamation. These are things that have been. There have been men on this earth of God's, of whom it was simply true that it was easier to turn the sun from its course than them from the paths of honour. There have been men like John the Baptist, who could speak the truth which had made their own spirits free, with the axe above their neck. There have been men, redeemed in their inmost being by Christ, on whom tyrants and mobs have done their worst, but when, like Stephen, the stones crashed in upon their brain, or when their flesh hissed and crackled in the flames, were calmly superior to it all. The power of evil had laid its shackles on the flesh: but the mind, and the soul, and the heart were free.

We conclude with two inferences:

1. To cultivate the love of truth. I do not mean veracity: that is another thing. Veracity is the correspondence between a proposition and a man's belief. Truth is the correspondence of the proposition with fact. The love of truth is the love of realities: the determination to rest upon facts, and not upon semblances. Take an illustration of the way in which the habit of cultivating truth is got. Two boys see a misshapen, hideous object in the dark. One goes up to the cause of his terror, examines it, learns

what it is; he knows the truth, and the truth has made him free. The other leaves it in mystery and unexplained vagueness, and is a slave for life to superstitions and indefinite terrors. Romance, prettiness, "dim religious lights," awe and mystery—these are not the atmosphere of Christ's gospel of liberty. Base the heart on facts. The truth alone can make you free.

2. See what a Christian is. Our society is divided into two classes. Those who are daring, inquisitive, but restrained by no reverence, and kept back by little religion. Those who may be called religious. But with all their excellencies we cannot help feeling that the elements of their character are feminine rather than masculine, and that they have no grasp or manly breadth, and hold on feeling rather than on truth.

Now, see what a Christian is, drawn by the hand of Christ. He is a man on whose clear and open brow God has set the stamp of truth: one whose very eye beams bright with honour; in whose very look and bearing you may see freedom, manliness, veracity: a brave man—a noble man—frank, generous, true; with, it may be, many faults:—whose freedom may take the form of impetuosity or rashness, the form of meanness never. Young Men! if you have been deterred from religion by its apparent feebleness and narrowness, remember—It is a manly thing to be a Christian.

THE KINGDOM OF THE TRUTH

ASSIZE SERMON

JOHN xviii. 37.—"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

THE Church is the kingdom of God on earth, and the whole fabric of the Christian Religion rests on the monarchy of Christ. The Hebrew prisoner who stood before the Roman Judge claimed to be the King of men: and eighteen centuries have only verified His claim. There is not a man bearing the Christian name, who does not in one form or another acknowledge Him to be the Sovereign of his soul.

The question therefore at once suggests itself—On what title does this claim rest?

Besides the title on which the Messiah grounded His pretensions to be the Ruler of a kingdom, three are conceivable. The title of force: the title of prescriptive authority: or the title of incontrovertible reasoning.

Had the Messiah founded His kingdom upon the basis of Force, He would have simply been a rival of the Cæsars. The imperial power of Rome rested on that Principle. This was all that Pilate meant at first by the question, "Art thou a king?" As a Roman he had no other conception of rule. Right well had Rome fulfilled her mission as the iron kingdom which was to command by strength, and give to the world the principles of Law. But that kingdom was wasting when these words were spoken. For seven hundred years had the Empire been building itself up. It gave way at last, and was crumbled into fragments by its own ponderous massiveness. To use the language of the prophet Daniel, miry clay had mixed with the kingdom of iron, and the softer nations which had been absorbed into it broke down its once invincible

strength; by corrupting and enervating its citizens: the conquerors of the world dropped the sword from a grasp grown nerveless. The Empire of strength was passing away; for no kingdom founded on force is destined to permanence. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

Before Pontius Pilate, Christ distinctly disclaimed this Right of Force as the foundation of His sovereignty. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (v. 36).

The next conceivable basis of a universal kingdom is prescriptive authority. The scribes and priests who waited outside for their victim conceived of such a kingdom. They *had* indeed already an ecclesiastical kingdom which dated back far beyond the origin of Rome. They claimed to rule on a title such as this—"It is written." But neither on this title did the Saviour found His claim. He spoke lightly of institutions which were venerable from age. He contravened opinions which were gray with the hoar of ages. It may be, that at times He *defended* Himself on the authority of Moses, by showing that what He taught was not in opposition to Moses; but it is observable that He never rested His claims as a teacher, or as the Messiah, on that foundation. The scribes fell back on this—"It has been said," or, "It is written." Christ taught, as the men of His day remarked, on an authority very different from that of the scribes. Not even on His own authority—He did not claim that His words should be recognised because He said them: but because they were true. "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Prescription—personal authority—these were not His basis of a kingdom.

One more possible title remains. He might have claimed to rule over men on the ground of incontrovertible demonstration of His principles. This was the ground taken by every philosopher who was the founder of a sect. Apparently, after the failure of his first guess, Pilate thought in the second surmise that this was what Jesus meant by calling Himself a king. When he heard of a kingdom, he

thought he had before him a rival of Cæsar; but when truth was named, he seems to have fancied that he was called to try a rival of the philosophers: some new candidate for a system: some new pretender of a truth which was to dethrone its rival system.

This seems to be implied in the bitter question, "What is Truth?" For the history of opinion in those days was like the history of opinion in our own: religions against religions, philosophies against philosophies: religion and philosophy opposed to one another: the opinion of to-day dethroned by the opinion of to-morrow: the heterodoxy of this age reckoned the orthodoxy of the succeeding one. And Pilate, feeling the vainness and the presumption of these pretensions, having lived to see failure after failure of systems which pretended to teach That which is, smiled bitterly at the enthusiast who again asserted confidently his claims to have discovered the indiscoverable. There broke from his lips a bitter, half-sarcastic, half-sad exclamation of hopeless scepticism, "What is Truth?"

And, indeed, had the Redeemer claimed this—to overthrow the doctrine of the Porch and of the Academy, and to enthrone Christianity as a Philosophy of Life upon their ruins by argument, that sceptical cry would have been not ill-timed.

In these three ways have men attempted the Propagation of the Gospel. By force, when the church ruled by persecution—by prescriptive authority, when she claimed infallibility, or any modification of infallibility in the Popery of Rome or the Popery of the pulpit—by reasoning, in the age of "evidences," when she only asked to have her proofs brought forward and calmly heard, pledged herself to rule the world by the conviction of the understanding, and laid the foundations of rationalism deep and broad. Let us hear the claim of the King Himself. He rested His royal rights on His testimony to the Truth. "Thou sayest, for I am a king (correcter translation); to this end was I born, to bear witness to the truth." The mode in which the subjects of the kingdom were brought beneath His sway

was by assimilation. "Every one that is of the Truth, heareth My voice." These, then, are our points.

I. The basis of the kingly rule of Christ.
II. The qualifications of the subjects of the kingdom.

I. The basis of the kingly rule of Christ.

Christ is a king in virtue of His being a witness to the truth. "Thou sayest right, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Truth is used here in a sense equivalent to reality—for "truth" substitute reality, and it will become more intelligible. For "the truth" is an ambiguous expression, limited in its application, meaning often nothing more than a theological creed, or a few dogmas of a creed which this or that party have agreed to call "the truth." It would indeed fritter down the majesty of the Redeemer's life, to say that He was a witness for the truth of any number of theological dogmas. Himself—His Life, were a witness to Truth in the sense of Reality. The realities of Life—the realities of the universe—to these his every act and word bore testimony. He was as much a witness to the truth of the purity of domestic life as to the truth of the doctrine of the Incarnation: to the truth of Goodness being identical with greatness as much as to the doctrine of the Trinity: and more—His mind corresponded with Reality as the dial with the sun.

Again, in being a witness to Reality, we are to understand something very much deeper than the statement that He spoke truly. There is a wide difference between truthfulness and mere veracity. Veracity implies a correspondence between words and thoughts: truthfulness, a correspondence between thoughts and realities. To be veracious, it is only necessary that a man give utterance to his convictions: to be true, it is needful that his convictions have affinity with Fact.

Let us take some illustrations of this distinction. The

Prophet tells of men who put sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet: who called good evil, and evil good: yet these were veracious men; for to them evil *was* good: and bitter *was* sweet:—There was a correspondence between their opinions and their words: this was veracity. But there was no correspondence between their opinions and eternal Fact: this was untruthfulness. They spoke their opinions truly, but their opinions were not true. The Pharisees in the time of Christ were men of veracity. What they thought they said. They thought that Christ was an impostor. They believed that to tithe mint, anise, and cummin, was as acceptable to God as to be just, and merciful, and true. It was their conviction that they were immeasurably better than publicans and profligates: yet veracious as they were, the title perpetually affixed to them is, "Ye hypocrites." The life they led being a false life, is called, in the phraseology of the Apostle John, a lie.

If a man speak a careless slander against another, believing it, he has not sinned against veracity: but the carelessness which has led him into so grave an error, effectually bars his claim to clear truthfulness. He is a veracious witness, but not a true one. Or a man may have taken up second-hand, indolently, religious views: may believe them: defend them vehemently,—Is he a man of truth? Has he bowed before the majesty of truth with that patient, reverential humbleness which is the mark of those who love her?

Imagination has pictured to itself a domain in which every one who enters should be compelled to speak only what he thought, and pleased itself by calling such domain the Palace of Truth. A palace of veracity, if you will: but no temple of the truth:—a place where every one would be at liberty to utter his own crude unrealities—to bring forth his delusions, mistakes, half-formed hasty judgments: where the depraved ear would reckon discord harmony: and the depraved eye mistake colour: the depraved moral taste take Herod or Tiberius for a king, and shout beneath the Redeemer's Cross, "Himself He cannot save." A temple of the truth? Nay, only a palace echoing with veracious

falsehoods: a Babel of confused sounds, in which egotism would rival egotism, and truth would be each man's own lie. Far, far more is implied here than that the Son of Man spoke veraciously, in saying that He was a Witness to the Truth.

Again, when it is said that He was a Witness to the Truth, it is implied that His very Being here *manifested* to the world Divine realities. Human nature is but meant to be a witness to the Divine, the true Humanity is a manifestation —or reflection of God. And that is Divine Humanity, in which the Humanity is a perfect representation of the Divine. "We behold," says the Apostle Paul, "in Christ, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." And, to borrow and carry on the metaphor, the difference between Christ and other men is this; they are imperfect reflections, He a perfect one, of God.

There are mirrors which are concave, which magnify the thing that they reflect: there are mirrors convex, which diminish it. And we, in like manner, represent the Divine in a false, distorted way. Fragments of truth torn out of connexion: snatches of harmony joined without unity. We exaggerate and diminish till all becomes untrue. We bring forth our own fancies, our own idiosyncrasies, our own imaginations: and the image of God can be no longer recognised.

In One alone has the Divine been so blended with the Human, that, as the ocean mirrors every star and every tint of blue upon the sky, so was the earthly Life of Christ the Life of God on earth.

Now, observe, that the perfection of humanity consists in faithful imitation of, or witness borne to, the Mind and Life of God. Whoever has studied and understood the Life of Christ will have remarked, not without surprise, that the whole principle of His existence was the habit of unceasing imitation. Listen to a few instances of this.

"The Son can do nothing of Himself, but that which He seeth the Father do." "The words which I speak I speak not of myself, but the Father which is with me, He doeth

the works." Do we remember the strange and startling principle on which He defends His infraction of the literal, legal Sabbath? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God the Father works all the Sabbath-day. So may Man, His Son. Do we recollect the ground on which He enforces forgiveness of injuries? A strange ground surely, which would never have occurred except to One whose life was habitual imitation. "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of (that is, resemble) your Father . . . for He sendeth His rain upon the just and upon the unjust."

This, then, is Man's: this was the Son of Man's relation to the Truth. Man is but a learner—a devout recipient of a revelation—here to listen with open ear devoutly for that which he shall hear; to gaze and watch for that which he shall see. Man can do no more. He cannot create Truth: he can only bear witness to it: he has no proud right of private judgment: he can only listen and report that which is in the universe. If he does not repeat and witness to that, he speaketh of his own, and forthwith ceaseth to be true. He is a liar, and the *father* of it, because he creates it. Each man in his vocation is in the world to do this. As truly as it was said by Christ, may it be said by each of us, even by those from whose trades and professions it seems most alien, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness to the Truth."

The architect is here to be a witness. He succeeds only so far as he is a witness, and a true one. The lines and curves, the acanthus on his column, the proportions, all are successful and beautiful, only so far as they are true: the report of an eye which has lain open to God's world. If he build his lighthouse to resist the storm, the law of imitation bids him build it after the shape of the spreading oak which has defied the tempest. If man construct the ship which is to cleave the waters, calculation or imitation builds it on the model upon which the Eternal Wisdom has already constructed the fish's form. The artist is a witness to the truth;

or he will never attain the beautiful. So is the agriculturist; or he will never reap a harvest. So is the statesman, building up a nation's polity on the principles which time has proved true, or else all his work crumbles down in revolution: for national revolution is only the Divine Rejection stamped on the social falsehood—which cannot stand. In every department of life, man must work truly—as a witness. He is born for that, nothing else: and nothing else can he do. Man the Son can do nothing of Himself, but that which He seeth God the Father do.

This was the Saviour's title to be a King; and His kingdom formed itself upon this law: "Every one that is of the Truth heareth my voice," that Eternal law which makes truth assimilate all that is congenial to itself. Truth is like life: whatever lives, absorbs into itself all that is congenial. The leaf that trembles in the wind assimilates the light of heaven to make its colour, and the sap of the parent stem: innumerable influences from heaven, and earth, and air, to make up its beautiful being.

So grew the Church of Christ; round Him as a centre, attracted by the truth: all that had in it harmony with His Divine Life and words, grew to Him (by gradual accretions): clung to Him as the iron to the magnet. All that were of His Spirit believed: all that had in them the spirit of sacrifice were attracted to His Cross. "I if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me."

He taught not by elaborate trains of argument, like a scribe or a philosopher: He uttered His truths rather as detached intuitions, recognised by intuition, to be judged only by being felt. For instance, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you." Prove that—by force—by authority—by argument—you cannot. It suffices that a man reply, "It is not so to me: it is more blessed to receive than it is to give." You have no reply: if he be not of the truth, you cannot make him hear Christ's voice. The truth of Christ is true to the unselfish: a falsehood to the selfish.

They that are of the truth, like Him, hear His voice: and if you ask the Christian's proof of the truth of such things, he has no other than this,—It is true to me, as any other intuitive truth is true—equals are equal, because my mind is so constituted that they seem so perforce. Purity is good, because my heart is so made that it feels it to be good.

Brother men,—the truer you are, the humbler, the nobler, the more will you feel Christ to be your King. You may be very little able to prove the King's Divine genealogy, or to appreciate those claims to your allegiance which arise out of His Eternal generation: but He will be your Sovereign and your Lord by that affinity of character which compels you to acknowlege His words and life to be Divine. "He that receiveth His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

II. We pass to the consideration of the qualification of the subjects of the Empire of the Truth. Who are they that are of the Truth.

1. The first qualification is to *be* true: "He that *is* of the truth heareth My Voice." Truth lies in character. Christ did not simply *speak* truth: He *was* truth: true through and through; for truth is a thing, not of words, but of Life and Being. None but a Spirit can be true.

Æ. g. The friends of Job spoke *words* of truth. Scarcely a maxim which they uttered could be impugned: cold, hard, theological verities: but verities out of place, in that place cruel and untrue. Job spoke many words not strictly accurate—hasty, impetuous, blundering, wrong: but the whirlwind came, and, before the Voice of God, the veracious falsehoods were swept into endless nothingness: the true *man*, wrong, perplexed, in verbal error, stood firm: he was true though his sentences were not: turned to the truth as the sunflower to the sun: as the darkened plant imprisoned in the vault turns towards the light, struggling to solve the fearful enigma of his existence.

Job was a servant of the truth, being true in character.

2. The next qualification is integrity. But by integrity I

do not mean simply sincerity or honesty: integrity rather according to the meaning of the word as its derivation interprets it—entireness—wholeness—soundness: that which Christ means when He says, "If thine eye be single or sound, thy whole body shall be full of light."

This integrity extends through the entireness or wholeness of the character. It is found in small matters as well as great; for the allegiance of the soul to truth is tested by small things rather than by those which are more important. There is many a man who would lose his life rather than perjure himself in a court of justice, whose life is yet a tissue of small insincerities. We think that we hate falsehood when we are only hating the consequences of falsehood. We resent hypocrisy, and treachery, and calumny, not because they are untrue, but because they harm us. We hate the false calumny, but we are half pleased with the false praise. It is evidently not the element of untruth here that is displeasing, but the element of harmfulness. Now he is a man of integrity who hates untruth *as* untruth: who resents the smooth and polished falsehood of society which does no harm: who turns in indignation from the glittering whitened lie of sepulchral Pharisaism which injures no one. Integrity recoils from deceptions which men would almost smile to hear called deception. To a moral, pure mind, the artifices in every department of life are painful: the stained wood which passes for a more firm and costly material in a building, and deceives the eye by seeming what it is not, marble: the painting which is intended to be taken for a reality: the gilding which is meant to pass for gold: and the glass which is worn to look like jewels; for there is a moral feeling and a truthfulness in architecture, in painting, and in dress, as well as in the market-place, and in the senate, and in the judgment-hall.

"These are trifles." Yes, these are trifles—but it is just these trifles which go to the formation of character. He that is habituated to deceptions and artificialities in trifles, will try in vain to be true in matters of importance: for truth is a thing of habit rather than of will. You cannot in

any given case, by any sudden and single effort, will to be true, if the habit of your life has been insincerity. And it is a fearful question, and a difficult one, how all these things, the atmosphere which we breathe of our daily life, may sap the very foundations of the power of becoming a servant of the truth. Life becomes fictitious: and it passes into religion, till our very religion bases itself upon a figment too. We are not righteous, but we expect God to make believe that we are righteous, in virtue of some peculiar doctrines which we hold; and so our very righteousness becomes the fictitious righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, instead of the righteousness which is by faith, the righteousness of those who are the children of the kingdom of the truth.

3. Once more. He is qualified to be the subject of the king who *does* the truth. Christianity joins two things inseparably together: acting truly, and perceiving truly. Every day the eternal nature of that principle becomes more certain. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.

It is a perilous thing to separate feeling from acting: to have learnt to feel rightly without acting rightly. It is a danger to which, in a refined and polished age, we are peculiarly exposed. The romance, the poem, and the sermon, teach us how to feel. Our feelings are delicately correct. But the danger is this:—feeling is given to lead to action; if feeling be suffered to awake without passing into duty, the character becomes untrue. When the emergency for real action comes, the feeling is, as usual, produced: but accustomed as it is to rise in fictitious circumstances without action, neither will it lead on to action in the real ones. "We pity wretchedness and shun the wretched." We utter sentiments, just, honourable, refined, lofty—but somehow, when a truth presents itself in the shape of a duty, we are unable to perform it. And so such characters become by degrees like the artificial pleasure-grounds of bad taste, in which the waterfall does not fall, and the grotto offers only the refreshment of an imaginary

shade, and the green hill does not strike the skies, and the tree does not grow. Their lives are a sugared crust of sweetness trembling over black depths of hollowness: more truly still, "whited sepulchres"—fair without to look upon, "within full of all uncleanness."

It is perilous again to separate thinking rightly from acting rightly. He is already half false who speculates on truth and does not do it. Truth is given, not to be contemplated, but to be done. Life is an action—not a thought. And the penalty paid by him who speculates on truth, is that by degrees the very truth he holds becomes to him a falsehood.

There is no truthfulness, therefore, except in the witness borne to God by doing His will—to live the truths we hold, or else they will be no truths at all. It was thus that He witnessed to the truth. He lived it. He spoke no touching truths for sentiment to dwell on, or thought to speculate upon. Truth with Him was a matter of life and death. He perilled His life upon the words He said. If He were true, the life of men was a painted life, and the woes He denounced unflinchingly would fall upon the Pharisees. But if *they* were true, or even strong, His portion in this life was the cross.

Who is a true man? He who does the truth; and never holds a principle on which he is not prepared in any hour to act, and in any hour to risk the consequences of holding it.

I make in conclusion one remark. The kingly character of truth is exhibited strikingly in the calmness of the bearing of the Son of Man before His judge. Veracity is not necessarily dignified. There is a vulgar effrontery—a spirit of defiance which taunts, and braves, and challenges condemnation. It marks the man who is conscious of sincerity, but of nothing higher—whose confidence is in himself and his own honesty, and who is absorbed in the feeling, "I speak the truth and am a martyr." Again, the man of mere veracity is often violent, for what he says rests upon his own assertion; and vehemence of assertion is the

only addition he can make to it. Such was the violence of Paul before Ananias. He was indignant at the injustice of being smitten contrary to the law; and the powerlessness of his position, the hopelessness of redress, joined to a conviction of the truth of what he said, produced that vehemence.

It has been often remarked that there is a great difference between theological and scientific controversy. Theologians are proverbially vituperative: because it is a question of veracity: the truth of their views, their moral perceptions, their intellectual acumen. There exists no test but argument on which they can fall back. If argument fails, all fails. But the man of science stands calmly on the facts of the universe. He is based upon reality. All the opposition and controversy in the world cannot alter facts, nor prevent the facts being manifest at last. He can be calm because he is a witness for the Truth.

In the same way, but in a sense far deeper and more sacred, the Son of Man stood *calm*, rooted in the Truth. There was none of the egotism of self-conscious veracity in those placid, confident, dignified replies. This was not the feeling—"I hold the truth,"—but "I am witness to the truth." They might spit upon Him—kill Him—crucify Him—give His ashes to the winds—they could not alter the Truth by which He stood. Was not that His own feeling? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

There was the kingly dignity of One, who, in Life and Death, stood firm on Truth as on a Rock.

In the name of Christ, I respectfully commend these thoughts for the special consideration of the present week, to those who will be pledged by oath to witness to the whole truth they know, and nothing but the truth: to those who, permitted by the merciful spirit of English jurisprudence, to watch that their client, if condemned, shall be condemned only according to the law, are not justified by the spirit of the life of Christ in falsifying or obscuring facts; and who, owing a high duty to a client, owe one yet higher

to the truth: and, lastly, to those whom the severe intellectual, and much more, moral training of the English bar has qualified for the high office of disentangling truth from the mazes of conflicting testimony.

From the trial-hour of Christ—from the Cross of the Son of God—there arises the principle to which all His life bore witness, that the first lesson of Christian life is this, Be true—and the second this, Be true—and the third this, Be true.

OBEDIENCE THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

JOHN vii. 17.—"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

THE first thing we have to do is to put ourselves in possession of the history of these words.

Jesus taught in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews marvelled at His spiritual wisdom. The cause of wonder was the want of scholastic education: "How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?" They had no conception of any source of wisdom beyond learning.

He Himself gave a different account of the matter. "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." And how He came possessed of it, speaking humanly, He taught (chap. v. 30): "My judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

That principle whereby He attained spiritual judgment or wisdom, He extends to all. "If *any* man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Here, then, manifestly,

there are two opinions respecting the origin of spiritual knowledge:

1. The popular one of the Jews: relying on a cultivated understanding.

2. The principle of Christ, which relied on trained affections and habits of obedience.

What is Truth? Study, said the Jews. Act, said Christ, and you shall know. A very precious principle to hold by in these days; and a very pregnant one of thought to us, who during the next few days must be engaged in the contemplation of crime, and to whom the question will suggest itself, How can men's lives be made true?

Religious controversy is fast settling into a conflict between two great extreme parties. Those who believe everything, and those who believe nothing: the disciples of credulity, and the disciples of scepticism.

The first rely on authority.

Foremost among these, and the only self-consistent ones, are the adherents of the Church of Rome—and into this body, by logical consistency, ought to merge all—Dissenters, Churchmen, Bible Christians, who receive their opinions because their sect, their church, or their documents assert them, not because they are true eternally in themselves.

The second class rely solely on a cultivated understanding. This is the root principle of Rationalism. Enlighten, they say, and sin will disappear. Enlighten, and we shall know all that can be known of God. Sin is an error of the understanding, not a crime of the will. Illuminate the understanding, show men that sin is folly, and sin will disappear. Political Economy will teach public virtue: knowledge of anatomy will arrest the indulgence of the passions. Show the drunkard the inflamed tissues of the brain, and he will be sobered by fear and reason.

Only enlighten, and spiritual truths will be tested. When the anatomist shall have hit on a right method of dissection, and appropriated sensation to this filament of the brain, and the religious sentiment to that fibre, we shall

know whether there be a soul or not, and whether consciousness will survive physical dissolution. When the chemist shall have discovered the principle of life, and found cause behind cause, we shall know whether the last cause of All is a Personal Will or a lifeless Force.

Concerning whom I only remark now, that these disciples of scepticism become easily disciples of credulity. It is instructive to see how they who sneer at Christian mysteries as old wives' fables, bow in abject reverence before Egyptian mysteries of three thousand years' antiquity; and how they who have cast off a God, believe in the veriest imposture, and have blind faith in this most vulgar juggling. Scepticism and credulity meet. Nor is it difficult to explain. Distrusting everything, they doubt their own conclusions and their own mental powers; and that for which they cannot account presents itself to them as supernatural and mysterious. Wonder makes them more credulous than those they sneer at.

In opposition to both these systems, stands the Christianity of Christ.

1. Christ never taught on personal authority. "My doctrine is not mine." He taught "not as the scribes." They dogmatized: because "it was written"—stickled for maxims, and lost principles. His authority was the authority of Truth, not of personality: He commanded men to believe, not because He said it; but He said it because it was true. Hence John xii. 47, 48, "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not—the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

2. He never taught that cultivation of the understanding would do all: but exactly the reverse. And so taught His apostles. St. Paul taught, "The world by wisdom knew not God." His Master said, not that clear intellect will give you a right heart, but that a right heart and a pure life will clarify the intellect. Not, Become a man of letters and learning, and you will attain spiritual freedom: but, Do rightly and you will judge justly: Obey and you will know. "My judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will,

but the will of the Father which sent me." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

I. The knowledge of the Truth, or Christian knowledge.
II. The condition on which it is attainable.

Christian knowledge—"he shall know." Its object—"the doctrine." Its degree, certainty—"shall *know*."

Doctrine is now, in our modern times, a word of limited meaning; being simply opposed to practical. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount would be called practical: St. Paul's epistles doctrinal. But in scripture, doctrine means broadly, teaching: anything that is taught is doctrine. Christ's doctrine embraces the whole range of his teaching—every principle and every precept. Let us select three departments of "doctrine" in which the principle of the text will be found true. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

1. It holds good in speculative truth. If any man will do God's will, he shall know what is truth and what is error. Let us see how wilfulness and selfishness hinder impartiality. How comes it that men are almost always sure to arrive at the conclusions reached by their own party? Surely because fear, interest, vanity, or the desire of being reckoned sound and judicious, or party spirit, bias them. Personal prospects: personal antipathies: these determine most men's creed. How will you remove this hindrance? By increased cultivation of mind? Why the Romanist is as accomplished as the Protestant; and learning is found in the Church and out of it. You are not sure that that high mental cultivation will lead a man either to Protestantism or the Church of England. Surely, then, by removing self-will, and so only, can the hindrance to right opinions be removed. Take away the last trace of interested feeling, and the way is cleared for men to come to an approximation towards unity, even in judgment on points speculative; and so he that will do God's will shall know of the doctrine.

2. In practical truths the principle is true. It is more true to say that our opinions depend upon our lives and habits, than to say that our lives depend upon our opinions, which is only now and then true. The fact is, men think in a certain mode on these matters, because their life is of a certain character, and their opinions are only invented afterwards as a defence for their life.

For instance, St. Paul speaks of a maxim among the Corinthians, "Let us eat and drink, *for* to-morrow we die." They excused their voluptuousness on the ground of its consistency with their sceptical creed. Life was short. Death came to-morrow. There was no hereafter. Therefore it was quite consistent to live for pleasure. But who does not see that the creed was the result, and not the cause of the life? Who does not see that first they ate and drank, and then believed to-morrow we die? "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers." Eating and drinking we lose sight of the life to come. When the immortal is overborne and smothered in the life of the flesh, how *can* men believe in life to come? Then disbelieving, they mistook the cause for the effect. Their moral habits and creed were in perfect consistency: yet it was the life that formed the creed, not the creed that formed the life. Because they were sensualists, immortality had become incredible.

Again slavery is defended, philosophically. The negro on his skull and skeleton, they say, has God's intention of his servitude written: he is the inferior animal, therefore it is right to enslave him. Did this doctrine precede the slave-trade? Did man arrive at it, and then, in consequence, conscientiously proceed with human traffic? Or was it invented to defend a practice existing already—the offspring of self-interest? Did not men first make slaves, and then search about for reasons to make their conduct plausible to themselves?

So, too, a belief in predestination is sometimes alleged in excuse of crime. But a man who suffers his will to be overpowered, naturally comes to believe that he is the sport

of fate: feeling powerless, he believes that God's decree has made him so. But let him but put forth one act of loving will, and then, as the nightmare of a dream is annihilated by an effort, so the incubus of a belief in tyrannous destiny is dissipated the moment a man wills to do the will of God. Observe, how he knows of the doctrine, directly he does the will.

There is another thing said respecting this knowledge of Truth. It respects the degree of certainty—"he shall *know*," not he shall have an opinion. There is a wide distinction between supposing and knowing—between fancy and conviction—between opinion and belief. Whatever rests on authority remains only supposition. You have an opinion, when you know what others think. You *know* when you feel. In matters practical you know only so far as you can do. Read a work on the "Evidences of Christianity," and it may become highly probable that Christianity, &c., are true. That is an opinion. Feel God: Do His will, till the Absolute Imperative within you speaks as with a living voice—Thou shalt, and thou shalt not; and then you do not think, you know that there is a God. That is a conviction and a belief.

Have we never seen how a child, simple and near to God, cuts asunder a web of sophistry with a single direct question? How, before its steady look and simple argument, some fashionable utterer of a conventional falsehood has been abashed? How a believing Christian scatters the forces of scepticism, as a morning ray, touching the mist on the mountain side, makes it vanish into thin air? And there are few more glorious moments of our humanity than those in which Faith does battle against intellectual proof: when, for example, after reading a sceptical book, or hearing a cold-blooded materialist's demonstration, in which God, the soul, and life to come, are proved impossible—up rises the heart in all the giant might of its immortality to do battle with the understanding, and with the simple argument "I *feel* them in my best and highest moments to be true," annihilates the sophistries of logic.

These moments of profound faith do not come once for all: they vary with the degree and habit of obedience. There is a plant which blossoms once in a hundred years. Like it, the soul blossoms only now and then in a space of years: but these moments are the glory and the heavenly glimpses of our purest humanity.

II. The condition on which knowledge of Truth is attainable. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

This universe is governed by laws. At the bottom of everything here there is a law. Things are in this way and not that: we call that a law, or condition. All departments have their own laws. By submission to them, you make them your own. Obey the laws of the body: such laws as say, Be temperate and chaste: or of the mind: such laws as say, Fix the attention; strengthen by exercise: and then their prizes are yours - health, strength, pliability of muscle, tenaciousness of memory, nimbleness of imagination, &c. Obey the laws of your spiritual being, and it has its prizes too. For instance, the condition or law of a peaceful life is submission to the law of meekness: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The condition of the Beatific Vision is a pure heart and life: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." To the impure God is simply invisible. The condition annexed to a sense of God's presence—in other words, that without which a sense of God's presence cannot be—is obedience to the laws of Love: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." The condition of spiritual wisdom, and certainty in truth, is obedience to the will of God, surrender of private will: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

In every department of knowledge, therefore, there is an appointed "organ," or instrument for discovery of its specific truth, and for appropriating its specific blessings. In the world of sense, the empirical intellect: in that world the

Baconian philosopher is supreme. His Novum Organon is Experience: he knows by experiment of touch, sight, &c. The religious man may not contravene his assertions—he is lord in his own province. But in the spiritual world, the "organ" of the scientific man, sensible experience, is powerless. If the chemist, geologist, physiologist, come back from their spheres and say, we find in the laws of affinity, in the deposits of past ages, in the structure of the human frame, no trace nor token of a God, I simply reply, I never expected you would. Obedience and self-surrender is the sole organ by which we gain a knowledge of that which cannot be seen nor felt. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." And just as by copying perpetually a master-painter's works we get at last an instinctive and infallible power of recognising his touch, so by copying and doing God's will, we recognise what is His—we know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether it be an arbitrary invention of a human self.

2. Observe the universality of the law. "If *any* man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The law was true of the Man Christ Jesus Himself. He tells us it is true of all other men.

In God's universe there are no favourites of heaven who may transgress the laws of the universe with impunity—none who can take fire in the hand and not be burnt—no enemies of heaven who if they sow corn will reap nothing. The law is just and true to all: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

In God's spiritual universe there are no favourites of heaven who can attain knowledge and spiritual wisdom apart from obedience. There are none reprobate by an eternal decree, who can surrender self, and in all things submit to God, and yet fail of spiritual convictions. It is not therefore a rare, partial condescension of God, arbitrary and causeless, which gives knowledge of the Truth to some, and shuts it out from others; but a vast, universal, glorious law. The Light lighteth every man that cometh

into the world. "If any man will do His will, he shall know."

See the beauty of this Divine arrangement. If the certainty of truth depended upon the proof of miracles, prophecy, or the discoveries of science; then Truth would be in the reach chiefly of those who can weigh evidence, investigate history, and languages, study by experiment; whereas as it is, "The *meek* will He guide in judgment and the meek will He teach His way." "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." The humblest and the weakest may know more of man, of moral evil and of good, by a single act of charity, or a prayer of self-surrender, than all the sages can teach: ay, or all the theologians can dogmatize upon.

They know nothing perhaps, these humble ones, of evidence, but they are sure that Christ is their Redeemer. They cannot tell what matter is, but they know that they are Spirits. They know nothing of the argument from design, but they feel God. The truths of God are spiritually discerned. They have never learned letters, but they have reached the Truth of Life.

3. Annexed to this condition, or a part of it, is earnestness. "If any man *will* do His will." Now that word "will" is not the will of the future tense, but will meaning volition. If any man wills, resolves, has the mind to do the will of God. So then it is not a chance fitful obedience that leads us to the Truth: nor an obedience paid while happiness lasts, and no longer—but an obedience rendered in entireness and in earnest. It is not written, If any man does his will—but if any man has the spirit and desire. If we are in earnest, we shall persevere like the Syrophenician woman, even though the ear of the universe seem deaf, and Christ Himself appear to bid us back. If we are not in earnest, difficulties will discourage us. Because will is wanting, we shall be asking still in ignorance and doubt, What is Truth?

All this will seem to many time misspent. They go to Church because it is the custom: all Christians believe it is the established religion. But there are hours, and they come to us all at some period of life or other, when the hand of Mystery seems to lie heavy on the soul—when some life-shock scatters existence, leaves it a blank and dreary waste henceforth for ever, and there appears nothing of hope in all the expanse which stretches out, except that merciful gate of death which opens at the end—hours when the sense of misplaced or ill-requited affection, the feeling of personal worthlessness, the uncertainty and meanness of all human aims, and a doubt of all human goodness, unfix the soul from all its old moorings, and leave it drifting—drifting over the vast Infinitude, with an awful sense of solitariness. Then the man whose faith rested on outward Authority and not on inward life, will find it give way: the authority of the Priest: the authority of the Church: or merely the authority of a document proved by miracles and backed by prophecy: the soul—conscious life hereafter—God—will be an awful desolate Perhaps. Well! In such moments you doubt all—whether Christianity be true: whether Christ was man, or God, or a beautiful fable. You ask bitterly, like Pontius Pilate, What is Truth? In such an hour what remains? I reply, Obedience. Leave those thoughts for the present. Act—be merciful and gentle—honest: force yourself to abound in little services: try to do good to others: be true to the Duty that you know. That must be right whatever else is uncertain. And by all the laws of the human heart, by the word of God, you shall not be left to doubt. Do that much of the will of God which is plain to you, "You shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION

PSALM xlii. 1-3.—"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"

THE value of the public reading of the Psalms is, that they express for us indirectly those deeper feelings which there would be a sense of indelicacy in expressing directly.

Example of Joseph: asking after his father, and blessing his brothers, as it were under the personality of another.

There are feelings of which we do not speak to each other: they are too sacred and too delicate. Such are most of our feelings to God. If we do speak of them, they lose their fragrance; become coarse; nay, there is even a sense of indelicacy and exposure.

Now the Psalms afford precisely the right relief for this feeling: wrapped up in the forms of poetry (metaphor, &c.,) that which might seem exaggerated is excused by those who do not feel it: while they who do can read them, applying them, without the suspicion of uttering *their own* feelings. Hence their soothing power, and hence, while other portions of Scripture may become obsolete, they remain the most precious parts of the Old Testament. For the heart of man is the same in all ages.

This forty-second Psalm contains the utterance of a sorrow of which men rarely speak. There is a grief worse than lack of bread or loss of friends: man in former times called it spiritual desertion. But at times the utterances of this solitary grief are as it were overheard, as in this Psalm. Read verse 6-7. And in a more august agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I. Causes of David's despondency.
II. The consolation.

I. Causes of David's despondency.

1. The thirst for God. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

There is a desire in the human heart best described as the cravings of infinitude. We are so made that nothing which has limits satisfies.

Hence the sense of freedom and relief which comes from all that suggests the idea of boundlessness: the deep sky—the dark night—the endless circle—the illimitable ocean.

Hence, too, our dissatisfaction with all that is or can be done. There never was the beauty yet than which we could not conceive something more beautiful. None so good as to be faultless in our eyes. No deed done by us, but we feel we have it in us to do a better. The heavens are not clean in our sight: and the angels are charged with folly.

Therefore to never rest is the price paid for our greatness. Could we rest, we must become smaller in soul. Whoever is satisfied with what he does has reached his culminating point, he will progress no more. Man's destiny is to be not dissatisfied, but for ever unsatisfied.

Infinite goodness—a beauty beyond what eye hath seen or heart imagined, a justice which shall have no flaw, and a righteousness which shall have no blemish—to crave for that, is to be "athirst for God."

2. The temporary loss of the sense of God's personality. "My soul is athirst for the living God."

Let us search our own experience. What we want is, we shall find, not infinitude, but a boundless One, not to feel that love is the *law* of this universe, but to feel One whose name is Love.

For else, if in this world of order there be no One in whose bosom that order is centred, and of whose Being it is the expression: in this world of manifold contrivance, no Personal Affection which gave to the skies their trembling tenderness, and to the snow its purity: then order, affection,

contrivance, wisdom, are only horrible abstractions, and we are in the dreary universe alone.

Foremost in the declaration of this truth was the Jewish religion. It proclaimed—not "Let us meditate on the Adorable Light, it shall guide our intellects,"—which is the most sacred verse of the Hindoo Sacred books: but "Thus saith the Lord, I am, that I am." In that word I am, is declared Personality; and it contains, too, in the expression, thus *saith*, the real idea of a Revelation, viz., the voluntary approach of the Creator to the creature.

Accordingly, these Jewish Psalms are remarkable for that personal tenderness towards God—those outbursts of passionate, individual attachment which are in every page. A Person, asking and giving heart for heart—inspiring love, because feeling it—that was the Israelite's Jehovah.

Now distinguish this from the God of the philosopher and the God of the mere theologian.

The God of the mere theologian is scarcely a living God—He did live; but for some eighteen hundred years we are credibly informed that no trace of His life has been seen. The canon is closed. The proofs that He was are in the things that He has made, and the books of men to whom He spake; but He inspires and works wonders no more. According to the theologians, He gives us proofs of design instead of God: doctrines instead of the Life indeed.

Different, too, from the God of the philosopher. The tendency of philosophy has been to throw back the personal Being further and still further from the time when every branch and stream was believed a living Power, to the period when "principles" were substituted for this belief: then "Laws:" and the philosopher's God is a law into which all other laws are resolvable.

Quite differently to this speaks the Bible of God. Not as a Law: but as the Life of all that is—the Being who feels and is felt—is loved and loves again—feels my heart throb into His, counts the hairs of my head: feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies: hears my prayers, and

interprets them through a Spirit which has affinity with my spirit.

It is a dark moment when the sense of that personality is lost: more terrible than the doubt of immortality. For of the two—eternity without a personal God, or God for seventy years without immortality—no one after David's heart would hesitate, "Give me God for life, to know and be known by Him." No thought is more hideous than that of an eternity without Him. "My soul is athirst for God." The desire of immortality is second to the desire for God.

3. The taunts of scoffers. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Now the hart here spoken of is the hart hunted, at bay, the big tears rolling from his eyes, and the moisture standing black upon his side. Let us see what the persecution was. "Where is now thy God?" ver. 13. This is ever the way in religious perplexity: the unsympathizing world taunts or misunderstands. In spiritual grief they ask, why is he not like others? In bereavement they call your deep sorrow unbelief. In misfortune they comfort you, like Job's friends, by calling it a visitation. Or like the barbarians at Melita, when the viper fastened on Paul's hand: no doubt they call you an infidel, though your soul be crying after God. Specially in that dark and awful hour, "Eloi, Eloi," *He* called on God: they said, "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him."

Now this is sharp to bear. It is easy to say Christian fortitude should be superior to it. But in darkness to have no sympathy: when the soul gropes for God, to have the hand of man relax its grasp! Forest-flies, small as they are, drive the noble war-horse mad: therefore David says, "as a sword in my bones," ver. 13. Now, observe, this feeling of forsakenness is no proof of being forsaken. Mourning after an absent God is an evidence of love as strong as rejoicing in a present one. Nay further, a man may be more decisively the servant of God and goodness while doubting His existence, and in the anguish of his

soul crying for light, than while resting in a common creed, and coldly serving Him. There has been One at least whose apparent forsakenness, and whose seeming doubt, bears the stamp of the majesty of Faith. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

II. David's consolation.

1. And first, in hope (see ver. 5): distinguish between the *feelings* of faith that God is present, and the *hope* of faith that He will be so.

There are times when a dense cloud veils the sunlight: you cannot see the sun, nor feel him. Sensitive temperaments feel depression: and that unaccountably and irresistibly. No effort can make you *feel*. Then you hope. Behind the cloud the sun is: from thence he will come: the day drags through, the darkest and longest night ends at last. Thus we bear the darkness and the otherwise intolerable cold, and many a sleepless night. It does not shine now—but it will. So too, spiritually.

There are hours in which physical derangement darkens the windows of the soul; days in which shattered nerves make life simply endurance; months and years in which intellectual difficulties, pressing for solution, shut out God. Then faith must be replaced by hope. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Clouds and darkness are round about Him: *but* Righteousness and Truth are the habitation of His throne. "My soul, hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

2. This hope was *in God*.

The mistake we make is to look for a source of comfort in ourselves: self-contemplation instead of gazing upon God. In other words, we look for comfort precisely where comfort never can be.

For, first, it is impossible to derive consolation from our own feelings, because of their mutability: to-day we are well, and our spiritual experience, partaking of these circumstances, is bright: but to-morrow some outward

circumstances change—the sun does not shine, or the wind is chill, and we are low, gloomy, and sad. Then, if our hopes were unreasonably elevated, they will now be unreasonably depressed; and so our experience becomes flux and reflux, ebb and flow; like the sea, that emblem of instability.

Next, it is impossible to get comfort from our own acts: for though acts are the test of character, yet in a low state no man can judge justly of his own acts. They assume a darkness of hue which is reflected on them by the eye that contemplates them. It would be well for all men to remember that sinners cannot judge of sin—least of all can we estimate our own sin.

Besides, we lose time in remorse. I have sinned—well—by the grace of God I must endeavour to do better for the future. But if I mourn for it overmuch all to-day, refusing to be comforted, to-morrow I shall have to mourn the wasted to-day; and that again will be the subject of another fit of remorse.

In the wilderness, had the children of Israel, instead of gazing on the serpent, looked down on their own wounds to watch the process of the granulation of the flesh, and see how deep the wound was, and whether it was healing slowly or fast, cure would have been impossible: their only chance was to look off the wounds. Just so, when, giving up this hopeless and sickening work of self-inspection, and turning from ourselves in Christian self-oblivion, we gaze on God, then first the chance of consolation dawns.

He is not affected by our mutability: our changes do not alter Him. When we are restless, He remains serene and calm: when we are low, selfish, mean, or dispirited, He is still the unalterable I AM. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. What God is in Himself, not what we may chance to feel Him in this or that moment to be, that is our hope. "My soul, hope thou *in God*."

SENSUAL AND SPIRITUAL EXCITEMENT

EPHESIANS v. 17, 18.—"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."

THERE is evidently a connection between the different branches of this sentence—for ideas cannot be properly contrasted which have not some connection—but what that connection is, is not at first sight clear. It almost appears like a profane and irreverent juxtaposition to contrast fulness of the Spirit with fulness of wine. Moreover, the structure of the whole context is antithetical. Ideas are opposed to each other in pairs of contraries; for instance, "fools" is the exact opposite to "wise;" "unwise," as opposed to "understanding," its proper opposite.

And here again, there must be the same true antithesis between drunkenness and spiritual fulness. The propriety of this opposition lies in the intensity of feeling produced in both cases. There is one intensity of feeling produced by stimulating the senses, another by vivifying the spiritual life within. The one commences with impulses from without, the other is guarded by forces from within. Here then is the similarity, and here the dissimilarity, which constitutes the propriety of the contrast. One is ruin, the other salvation. One degrades, the other exalts.

This contrast then is our subject for to-day.

1. The effects are similar. On the day of Pentecost, when the first influences of the Spirit descended on the early Church, the effects resembled intoxication. They were full of the Spirit, and mocking bystanders said, "These men are full of new wine;" for they found themselves elevated into the ecstasy of a life higher than their own, possessed of powers which they could not control; they spoke incoherently and irregularly; to the most part of those assembled, unintelligibly.

Now compare with this the impression produced upon savage nations—suppose those early ages in which the spectacle of intoxication was presented for the first time. They saw a man under the influence of a force different from, and in some respects inferior to, their own. To them the bacchanal appeared a being half inspired; his frenzy seemed a thing for reverence and awe, rather than for horror and disgust; the spirit which possessed him must be, they thought, divine; they deified it, worshipped it under different names as a god; even to a clearer insight the effects are wonderfully similar. It is almost proverbial among soldiers that the daring produced by wine is easily mistaken for the self-devotion of a brave heart.

The play of imagination in the brain of the opium-eater is as free as that of genius itself, and the creations produced in that state by the pen or pencil are as wildly beautiful as those owed to the nobler influences. In years gone by, the oratory of the statesman in the senate has been kindled by semi-intoxication, when his noble utterances were set down by his auditors to the inspiration of patriotism.

It is this very resemblance which deceives the drunkard: he is led on by his feelings as well as by his imagination. It is not the sensual pleasure of the glutton that fascinates him; it is those fine thoughts and those quickened sensibilities which were excited in that state, which he is powerless to produce out of his own being, or by his own powers, and which he expects to reproduce by the same means. The experience of our first parent is repeated in him: at the very moment when he expects to find himself as the gods, knowing good and evil, he discovers that he is unexpectedly degraded, his health wrecked, and his heart demoralized. Hence it is almost as often the finer as the baser spirits of our race which are found the victims of such indulgence. Many will remember while I speak, the names of the gifted of their species, the degraded men of genius who were the victims of these deceptive influences. The half-inspired painter, poet, musician, who began by soothing opiates to

calm the over-excited nerves, or stimulate the exhausted brain, who mistook the sensation for somewhat half divine, and became morally and physically wrecks of manhood, degraded even in their mental conceptions. It was, therefore, no mere play of words which induced the apostle to bring these two things together. That which might else seem irreverent appears to have been a deep knowledge of human nature; he contrasts, because his rule was to distinguish two things which are easily mistaken for each other.

2. The second point of resemblance is the necessity of intense feeling. We have fulness—fulness, it may be, produced by outward stimulus, or else by an inpouring of the Spirit. What we want is life, "more life, and fuller." To escape from monotony, to get away from the life of mere routine and habits, to feel that we are alive—with more of surprise and wakefulness in our existence. To have less of the gelid, torpid, tortoise-like existence. "To feel the years before us." To be consciously existing.

Now this desire lies at the bottom of many forms of life which are apparently as diverse as possible. It constitutes the fascination of the gambler's life: money is not what he wants—were he possessed of thousands to-day, he would risk them all to-morrow—but it is that being perpetually on the brink of enormous wealth and utter ruin, he is compelled to realize at every moment the possibility of the extremes of life. Every moment is one of feeling. This, too, constitutes the charm of all those forms of life in which the gambling feeling is predominant—where a sense of skill is blended with a mixture of chance. If you ask the statesman why it is, that possessed as he is of wealth, he quits his princely home for the dark metropolis, he would reply "That he loves the excitement of a political existence." It is this, too, which gives to the warrior's and the traveller's existence such peculiar reality; and it is this in a far lower form which stimulates the pleasure of a fashionable life—which sends the votaries of the world in constant round from the capital to the watering place, and from the watering place

to the capital; what they crave for is the power of feeling intensely.

Now the proper and natural outlet for this feeling is the life of the Spirit. What is religion but fuller life? To live in the Spirit, what is it but to have keener feelings and mightier powers—to rise into a higher consciousness of life? What is religion's self but feeling? The highest form of religion is charity. Love is of God, and he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. This is an intense feeling, too intense to be excited, profound in its calmness, yet it rises at times in its higher flights into that ecstatic life which glances intuitively through ages in a moment. These are the pentecostal hours of our existence, when the Spirit comes as a mighty rushing wind, in cloven tongues of fire, filling the soul with God.

II. The dissimilarity or contrast in St. Paul's idea. The one fulness begins from without, the other from within. The one proceeds from the flesh and then influences the emotions. The other reverses this order. Stimulants, like wine, inflame the senses, and through them set the imaginations and feelings on fire; and the law of our spiritual being is, that that which begins with the flesh, sensualizes the Spirit—whereas that which commences in the region of the Spirit, spiritualizes the senses, in which it subsequently stirs emotion. But the misfortune is that men mistake this law of their emotions; and the fatal error is, when having found spiritual feelings existing in connection, and associated with, fleshly sensations, men expect by the mere irritation of the emotions of the frame to reproduce those high and glorious feelings. You might conceive the recipients of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost acting under this delusion; it is conceivable that having observed certain bodily phenomena—for instance, incoherent utterances and thrilled sensibilities co-existing with those sublime spiritualities—they might have endeavoured, by a repetition of those incoherencies, to obtain a fresh descent of the Spirit. In fact, this was exactly what was tried in after ages of the

Church. In those events of church history which are denominated revivals, in the camp of the Methodist and the Ranter, a direct attempt was made to arouse the emotions by exciting addresses, and vehement language. Convulsions, shrieks, and violent emotions, were produced, and the unfortunate victims of this mistaken attempt to produce the cause by the effect, fancied themselves, and were pronounced by others, converted. Now the misfortune is, that this delusion is the more easy from the fact that the results of the two kinds of causes resemble each other. You may galvanize the nerve of a corpse till the action of a limb startles the spectator with the appearance of life. It is not life, it is only a spasmodic hideous mimicry of life. Men having seen that the spiritual is always associated with forms, endeavour by reproducing the forms, to recall spirituality; you do produce thereby a something that looks like spirituality, but it is a resemblance only. The worst case of all occurs in the department of the affections. That which begins in the heart ennobles the whole animal being, but that which begins in the inferior departments of our being is the most entire degradation and sensualizing of the soul.

Now it is from this point of thought that we learn to extend the apostle's principle. Wine is but a specimen of a class of stimulants. All that begins from *without* belongs to the same class. The stimulus may be afforded by almost any enjoyment of the senses. Drunkenness may come from anything wherein is excess; from over-indulgence in society, in pleasure, in music, and in the delight of listening to oratory, nay, even from the excitement of sermons and religious meetings. The prophet tells us of those who are drunken, and not with wine.

The other point of difference is one of effect. Fulness of the Spirit calms; fulness produced by excitement satiates and exhausts. They who know the world of fashion tell us that the tone adopted there is, either to be, or to affect to be, sated with enjoyment, to be proof against surprise, to have lost all keenness of enjoyment, and to have all keenness of wonder gone. That which ought to be men's

shame becomes their boast—unsusceptibility of any fresh emotion.

Whether this be real or affected, matters not; it is, in truth, the real result of the indulgence of the senses. The law is this: the "crime of sense is avenged by sense which wears with time;" for it has been well remarked that the terrific punishment attached to the habitual indulgence of the senses is, that the incitements to enjoyment increase in proportion as the power of enjoyment fades.

Experience at last forbids even the hope of enjoyment; the sin of the intoxicated soul is loathed, detested, abhorred; yet it is done. The irritated sense, like an avenging fury, goads on with a restlessness of craving, and compels a reiteration of the guilt though it has ceased to charm.

To this danger our own age is peculiarly exposed. In the earlier and simpler ages, the need of keen feeling finds a natural and safe outlet in compulsory exertions. For instance, in the excitement of real warfare, and in the necessity of providing the sustenance of life, warlike habits and healthy labour stimulate, without exhausting life. But in proportion as civilisation advances, a large class of the community are exempted from the necessity of these, and thrown upon a life of leisure. Then it is that artificial life begins, and artificial expedients become necessary to sharpen the feelings amongst the monotony of existence; every amusement and all literature become more pungent in their character; life is no longer a thing proceeding from powers *within*, but sustained by new impulses from without.

There is one peculiar form of this danger to which I would specially direct your attention. There is one nation in Europe which, more than any other, has been subjected to these influences. In ages of revolution, nations live fast; centuries of life are passed in fifty years. In such a state, individuals become subjected more or less to the influences which are working around them. Scarcely an enjoyment or a book can be met with which does not bear the impress of this intensity. Now, the particular danger to which I allude is French novels, French

romances, and French plays. The overflowings of that cup of excitement have reached our shores. I do not say that these works contain anything coarse or gross—better if it were so: evil which comes in a form of grossness is not nearly so dangerous as that which comes veiled in gracefulness and sentiment. Subjects which are better not touched upon at all are discussed, examined, and exhibited in all the seductive forms of imagery. You would be shocked at seeing your son in a fit of intoxication; yet, I say it solemnly, better that your son should reel through the streets in a fit of drunkenness, than that the delicacy of your daughter's mind should be injured, and her imagination inflamed with false fire. Twenty-four hours will terminate the evil in the one case. Twenty-four hours will not exhaust the effects of the other; you must seek the consequences at the end of many, many years. I speak that which I do know; and if the earnest warning of one who has seen the dangers of which he speaks realized, can reach the heart of one Christian parent, he will put a ban on all such works, and not suffer his children's hearts to be excited by a drunkenness which is worse than that of wine. For the worst of it is, that the men of our time are not yet alive to this growing evil; they are elsewhere—in their studies, counting-houses, professions—not knowing the food, or rather poison, on which their wives' and daughters' intellectual life is sustained. It is precisely those who are most unfitted to sustain the danger, whose feelings need restraint instead of spur, and whose imaginations are inflammable, that are specially exposed to it.

On the other hand, spiritual life calms while it fills. True it is that there are pentecostal moments when such life reaches the stage of ecstasy. But these were given to the Church to prepare her for suffering, to give her martyrs a glimpse of blessedness, which might sustain them afterwards in the terrible struggles of death. True it is that there are pentecostal hours when the soul is surrounded by a kind of glory, and we are tempted to make tabernacles upon the Mount, as if life were meant for rest; but

out of that very cloud there comes a voice telling of the Cross, and bidding us descend into the common world again to simple duties and humble life. This very principle seems to be contained in the text.

The apostle's remedy for this artificial feeling is—"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs."

Strange remedy! Occupation fit for children—too simple far for men: as astonishing as the remedy prescribed by the prophet to Naaman—to wash in simple water, and be clean; yet therein lies a very important truth. In ancient medical phraseology, herbs possessed of healing natures were called simples: in God's laboratory, all things that heal are simple—all natural enjoyments—all the deepest—are simple too. At night, man fills his banquet-hall with the glare of splendour which fevers as well as fires the heart; and at the very same hour, as if by intended contrast, the quiet stars of God steal forth, shedding, together with the deepest feeling, the profoundest sense of calm. One from whose knowledge of the sources of natural feeling there lies almost no appeal, has said that to him,

> "The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

This is exceedingly remarkable in the life of Christ. No contrast is more striking than that presented by the thought, that that deep and beautiful life was spent in the midst of mad Jerusalem. Remember the Son of man standing quietly in the porches of Bethesda, when the streets all around were filled with the revelry of innumerable multitudes, who had come to be present at the annual feast. Remember Him pausing to weep over his country's doomed metropolis, unexcited, while the giddy crowd around Him were shouting "Hosannas to the Son of David!" Remember Him in Pilate's judgment-hall, meek, self-possessed, standing in the serenity of Truth, while all around Him was agitation—agitation in the breast of

Pilate, hatred in the bosom of the Pharisees, consternation in the heart of the disciples.

And this, in truth, is what we want: we want the vision of a calmer and simpler Beauty, to tranquillize us in the midst of artificial tastes—we want the draught of a purer spring to cool the flame of our excited life;—we want, in other words, the Spirit of the Life of Christ, simple, natural, with power to calm and soothe the feelings which it rouses: the fulness of the Spirit which can never intoxicate!

WORLDLINESS

1 JOHN ii. 15-17.—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

RELIGION differs from morality in the value which it places on the affections. Morality requires that an act be done on principle. Religion goes deeper, and inquires the state of the heart. The Church of Ephesus was unsuspected in her orthodoxy, and unblemished in her zeal: but to the ear of him who saw the apocalyptic vision, a voice spake, "I have somewhat against thee in that thou has left thy first love."

In the eye of Christianity he is a Christian who loves the Father. He who loves the world may be in his way a good man, respecting whose eternal destiny we pronounce no opinion: but one of the Children of the Kingdom he is not.

Now, the boundary lines of this love of the world, or worldliness, are exceedingly difficult to define. Bigotry pronounces many things wrong which are harmless: laxity permits many which are by no means innocent: and it is a

question perpetually put, a question miserably perplexing to those whose religion consists more in avoiding that which is wrong than in seeking that which is right,—what is Worldliness?

To that question we desire to find to-day an answer in the text; premising this, that our object is to put ourselves in possession of principles. For otherwise we shall only deal with this matter as empirics; condemning this and approving that by opinion, but on no certain and intelligible ground—we shall but float on the unstable sea of opinion.

We confine ourselves to two points.

I. The nature of the forbidden world.
II. The reason for which it is forbidden.

I. The nature of the forbidden world.

The first idea suggested by "the world" is this green earth, with its days and nights, its seasons, its hills and its valleys, its clouds and brightness. This is not the world the love of which is prohibited; for, to forbid the love of this would be to forbid the love of God.

There are three ways in which we learn to know Him. First, by the working of our minds. Love, Justice, Tenderness: if we would know what they mean in God, we must gain the conception from their existence in ourselves. But inasmuch as humanity is imperfect in us, if we were to learn of God only from His image in ourselves, we should run the risk of calling the evil good, and the imperfect divine. Therefore He has given us, besides this, the representation of Himself in Christ, where is found the meeting-point of the Divine and the human, and in whose Life the character of Deity is reflected as completely as the sun is seen in the depth of the still, untroubled lake.

But there is a third way still, in which we attain the idea of God: This world is but manifested Deity—God shown to eye, and ear, and sense. This strange phenomenon of a world, what is it? All we know of it—all we know of

matter—is, that it is an assemblage of Powers which produce in us certain sensations : but what those Powers are in themselves we know not. The sensation of colour, form, weight, we have ; but what it is which gives those sensations —in the language of the schools, what is the Substratum which supports the accidents or qualities of Being—we cannot tell. Speculative Philosophy replies, It is but our ownselves becoming conscious of themselves. We, in our own being, are the cause of all phenomena. Positive philosophy replies, What the Being of the world is we cannot tell, we only know what it seems to us. Phenomena —appearance—beyond this we cannot reach. Being itself is, and for ever must be, unknowable. Religion replies, that something is God. The world is but manifested Deity. That which lies beneath the surface of all Appearance, the cause of all Manifestation, is God. So that to forbid the love of all this world, is to forbid the love of that by which God is known to us. The sounds and sights of this lovely world are but the drapery of the robe in which the Invisible has clothed Himself. Does a man ask what this world is, and why man is placed in it? It was that the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world might be clearly seen. Have we ever stood beneath the solemn vault of heaven, when the stars were looking down in their silent splendour, and not felt an overpowering sense of His eternity? When the white lightning has quivered in the sky, has that told us nothing of Power, or only something of electricity? Rocks and mountains, are they here to give us the idea of material massiveness, or to reveal the conception of the Strength of Israel? When we take up the page of past history, and read that wrong never prospered long, but that nations have drunk one after another the cup of terrible retribution, can we dismiss all that as the philosophy of history, or shall we say that through blood, and war, and desolation, we trace the footsteps of a presiding God, and find evidence that there sits at the helm of this world's affairs, a strict, and rigorous, and most terrible justice? To the eye that can see—to the heart that is not paralyzed,

God is here. The warnings which the Bible utters against the things of this world bring no charge against the glorious world itself. The world is the glass through which we see the Maker. But what men do is this: They put the dull quicksilver of their own selfishness behind the glass, and so it becomes not the transparent medium through which God shines, but the dead opaque which reflects back ourselves. Instead of lying with open eye and heart to *receive*, we project ourselves upon the world and *give*. So it gives us back our own false feelings and nature. Therefore it brings forth thorns and thistles. Therefore it grows weeds—weeds to us. Therefore the lightning burns with wrath, and the thunder mutters vengeance. By all which it comes to pass that the very Manifestation of God has transformed itself—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life: and all that is in the world is no longer of the Father, but is of the world.

By the world, again, is sometimes meant the men that are in the world. And thus the command would run—Love not men, but love God. It has been so read. The Pharisees read it so of old. The property which natural affection demanded for the support of parents—upon that they wrote "Corban," a gift for God, and robbed men that they might give to God. Yet no less than this is done whenever human affection is called idolatry. As if God were jealous of our love, in the human sense of jealousy. As if we could love God the more by loving man the less. As if it were not by loving our brother whom we have seen, that we approximate towards the love of God whom we have not seen. This is but the cloak for narrowness of heart. Men of withered affections excuse their lovelessness by talking largely of the affection due to God. Yet, like the Pharisees, the love on which Corban is written is never given to God, but really retained for self.

No, let a man love his neighbour as himself. Let him love his brother—sister—wife—with all the intensity of his heart's affection. This is not St. John's forbidden world.

Again. By the world is often understood the worldly

occupation, trade, or profession, which a man exercises. And, accordingly, it is no uncommon thing to hear this spoken of as something which, if not actually anti-religious, is, so far as it goes, time taken away from the religious life. But when the man from whom the legion has been expelled, asked Jesus for the precepts of a religious existence, the reply sent him back to home. His former worldliness had consisted in doing his worldly duties ill—his future religiousness was to consist in doing those same duties better. A man's profession or trade is not only not incompatible with religion (provided it be a lawful one)—it is his religion. And this is true even of those callings which at first sight appear to have in them something hard to reconcile with religiousness. For instance, the profession of a lawyer. He is a worldling in it if he use it for some personal greed, or degrade it by chicanery. But in itself it is an occupation which sifts right from wrong; which, in the entangled web of human life, unwinds the meshes of error. He is by profession enlisted on the side of the Right—directly connected with God, the central point of Justice and Truth. A nobler occupation need no man desire than to be a fellow-worker with God. Or take the soldier's trade—in this world generally a trade of blood, and revenge, and idle licentiousness. Rightly understood, what is it? A soldier's whole life, whether he will or not, is an enunciation of the greatest of religious truths, the voluntary sacrifice of one for the sake of many. In the detail of his existence, how abundant are the opportunities for the voluntary recognition of this. Opportunities such as that when the three strong men brake through the lines of the enemy to obtain the water for their sovereign's thirst—opportunities as when that same heroic sovereign poured the untasted water on the ground, and refused to drink because it was his soldiers' lives—he could not drink at such a price. Earnestness in a lawful calling is not worldliness. A profession is the sphere of our activity. There is something sacred in work. To work in the appointed sphere is to be religious—as religious as to pray. This is not the forbidden world.

Now to define what worldliness is. Remark, first, that it is determined by the spirit of a life, not the objects with which the life is conversant. It is not the "flesh," nor the "eye," nor "life," which are forbidden, but it is the *lust* of the flesh, and the *lust* of the eye, and the *pride* of life. It is not this earth nor the men who inhabit it—nor the sphere of our legitimate activity, that we may not love; but the way in which the love is given which constitutes worldliness. Look into this a little closer. The lust of the flesh. Here is affection for the outward: Pleasure, that which affects the senses only: the flesh, that enjoyment which comes from the emotions of an hour, be it coarse or be it refined. The pleasure of wine or the pleasure of music, so far as it is only a movement of the flesh. Again, the lust of the eye. Here is affection for the transient, for the eye can only gaze on form and colour—and these are things that do not last.

Once more—the pride of life. Here is affection for the unreal. Men's opinion—the estimate which depends upon wealth, rank, circumstances. Worldliness then consists in these three things:—Attachment to the Outward—attachment to the Transitory—attachment to the Unreal: in opposition to love for the Inward, the Eternal, the True: and the one of these affections is necessarily expelled by the other. If a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. But let a man once feel the power of the kingdom that is within, and then the love fades of that emotion, whose life consists only in the thrill of a nerve, or the vivid sensation of a feeling: he loses his happiness and wins his blessedness. Let a man get but one glimpse of the King in his beauty, and then the forms and shapes of things here are but the types of an invisible loveliness: types which he is content should break and fade. Let but a man feel truth—that goodness is greatness—that there is no other greatness—and then the degrading reverence with which the titled of this world bow before wealth, and the ostentation with which the rich of this world profess their familiarity with title: all the pride of life, what is it to him? The love of the Inward—

Everlasting, Real—the love, that is, of the Father, annihilates the love of the world.

II. We pass to the reasons for which the love of the world is forbidden.

The first reason assigned is, that the love of the world is incompatible with the love of God. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Now what we observe in this is, that St. John takes it for granted that we must love something. If not the love of the Father, then of necessity the love of the world. Love misplaced, or love rightly placed—you have your choice between these two: you have not your choice between loving God or nothing. No man is sufficient for himself. Every man must go out of himself for enjoyment. Something in this universe besides himself there must be to bind the affections of every man. There is that within us which compels us to attach ourselves to something outward. The choice is not this—Love, or be without love. You cannot give the pent-up steam its choice of moving or not moving. It must move one way or the other: the right way or the wrong way. Direct it rightly, and its energy rolls the engine-wheels smoothly on their track: block up its passage, and it bounds away, a thing of madness and ruin. Stop it you cannot; it will rather burst. So it is with our hearts. There is a pent-up energy of love, gigantic for good or evil. Its right way is in the direction of our Eternal Father: and then let it boil and pant as it will, the course of the man is smooth. Expel the love of God from the bosom—what then? Will the passion that is within cease to burn? Nay. Tie the man down—let there be no outlet for his affections—let him attach himself to nothing, and become a loveless spirit in this universe, and then there is what we call a broken heart: the steam bursts the machinery that contains it. Or else let him take his course, unfettered and free, and then we have the riot of worldliness—a man with strong affections thrown off the line, tearing himself to pieces, and carrying desolation along with him. Let us comprehend our own nature, ourselves, and our

destinies. God is our Rest, the only One that can quench the fever of our desire. God in Christ is what we want. When men quit that, so that "the love of the Father is not in them," then they must perforce turn aside: the nobler heart to break with disappointment—the meaner heart to love the world instead, and sate and satisfy itself as best it may on things that perish in the using. Herein lies the secret of our being, in this world of the affections. This explains why our noblest feelings lie so close to our basest—why the noblest so easily metamorphose themselves into the basest. The heart which was made large enough for God, wastes itself upon the world.

The second reason which the apostle gives for not squandering affection on the world is its transitoriness. Now this transitoriness exists in two shapes. It is transitory in itself—the world passeth away. It is transitory in its power of exciting desire—the lust thereof passeth away.

It is a twice told tale that the world is passing away from us, and there is very little new to be said on the subject. God has written it on every page of his creation that there is nothing here which lasts. Our affections change. The friendships of the man are not the friendships of the boy. Our very selves are altering. The basis of our being may remain, but our views, tastes, feelings, are no more our former self than the oak is the acorn. The very face of the visible world is altering around us: we have the gray mouldering ruins to tell of what was once. Our labourers strike their ploughshares against the foundations of buildings which once echoed to human mirth—skeletons of men, to whom life once was dear—urns and coins that remind the antiquarian of a magnificent empire. To-day the shot of the enemy defaces and blackens monuments and venerable temples, which remind the Christian that into the deep silence of eternity, the Roman world, which was in its vigour in the days of John, has passed away. And so things are going. It is a work of weaving and unweaving. All passes. Names that the world heard once in thunder are scarcely heard at the end of centuries—good or bad, they pass.

A few years ago and *we* were not. A few centuries further, and we reach the age of beings of almost another race. Nimrod was the conqueror and scourge of his far-back age. Tubal Cain gave to the world the iron which was the foundation of every triumph of men over nature. We have their names now. But the philologist is uncertain whether the name of the first is real or mythical—and the traveller excavates the sand-mounds of Nineveh to wonder over the records which he cannot decipher. Tyrant and benefactor, both are gone. And so all things are moving on to the last fire which shall wrap the world in conflagration, and make all that has been the recollection of a dream. This is the history of the world, and all that is in it. It passes while we look at it. Like as when you watch the melting tints of the evening sky—purple-crimson, gorgeous gold, a few pulsations of quivering light, and it is all gone:—we are such stuff as dreams are made of.

The other aspect of this transitoriness is, that the lust of the world passeth away. By which the apostle seems to remind us of that solemn truth that, fast as the world is fleeting from us, faster still does the taste for its enjoyments fleet: fast as the brilliancy fades from earthly things, faster still does the eye become wearied of straining itself upon them.

Now there is one way in which this takes place, by a man becoming satiated with the world. There is something in earthly rapture which cloys. And when we drink deep of pleasure, there is left behind something of that loathing which follows a repast on sweets. When a boy sets out in life, it is all fresh—freshness in feeling—zest in his enjoyment—purity in his heart. Cherish that, my young brethren, while you can—lose it, and it never comes again. It is not an easy thing to cherish it, for it demands restraint in pleasure, and no young heart loves that. Religion has only calm, sober, perhaps monotonous pleasures to offer at first. The deep rapture of enjoyment comes in after-life. And that will not satisfy the young heart. Men will know what pleasure is, and they drink deep. Keen delight—feverish

enjoyment—that is what you long for : and these emotions lose their delicacy and their relish, and will only come at the bidding of gross excitements. The ecstasy which once rose to the sight of the rainbow in the sky, or the bright brook, or the fresh morning, comes languidly at last only in the crowded midnight room, or the excitement of commercial speculation, or beside the gaming-table, or amidst the fever of politics. It is a spectacle for men and angels, when a man has become old in feeling and worn out before his time—Know we none such among our own acquaintance? Have the young never seen those aged ones who stand amongst them in their pleasures, almost as if to warn them of what they themselves must come to at last? Have they never marked the dull and sated look that they cast upon the whole scene, as upon a thing which they would fain enjoy and cannot? Know you what you have been looking on? A sated worldling—one to whom pleasure was rapture once, as it is to you now. Thirty years more, that look and that place will be yours : and that is the way the world rewards its veterans; it chains them to it after the "lust of the world" has passed away.

Or this may be done by a discovery of the unsatisfactoriness of the world. That is a discovery not made by every man. But there are some at least who have learned it bitterly, and that without the aid of Christ. Some there are who would not live over this past life again even if it were possible. Some there are who would gladly have done with the whole thing at once, and exchange—oh! how joyfully —the garment for the shroud. And some there are who cling to life, not because life is dear, but because the future is dark, and they tremble somewhat at the thought of entering it. Clinging to life is no proof that a man is still longing for the world. We often cling to life the more tenaciously as years go on. The deeper the tree has struck its roots into the ground, the less willing is it to be rooted up. But there is many a one who so hangs on just because he has not the desperate hardihood to quit it, nor faith enough to be "willing to depart." The world and he have under-

stood each other. He has seen through it. He has ceased to hope anything from it. The love of the Father is not in him: but "the lust of the world" has passed away.

Lastly, A reason for unlearning the love of the world is the solitary permanence of Christian action. In contrast with the fleetingness of this world, the apostle tells us of the stability of labour. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." And let us mark this. Christian life is action: not a speculating—not a debating: but a doing. One thing, and only one, in this world has eternity stamped upon it. Feelings pass: resolves and thoughts pass: opinions change. What you have done lasts—lasts in you. Through ages, through eternity, what you have done for Christ, that and only that you are. "They rest from their labours," saith the Spirit, "and their works do follow them." If the love of the Father be in us, where is the thing done which we have to show? You think justly—feel rightly—yes—but your work. Produce it. Men of wealth—men of talent—men of leisure: What are you *doing* in God's world for God?

Observe, however, to distinguish between the act and the actor:—It is not the thing done, but the Doer who lasts. The thing done often is a failure. The cup given in the name of Christ may be given to one unworthy of it: but think ye that the love with which it was given has passed away? Has it not printed itself indelibly in the character by the very act of giving? Bless, and if the Son of peace be there, your act succeeds: but if not, your blessing shall return unto you again. In other words, the act may fail; but the doer of it abideth for ever.

We close this subject with two practical truths.

First of all, let us learn from earthly changefulness a lesson of cheerful activity. The world has its way of looking at all this—but it is not the Christian's way. There has been nothing said to-day that a worldly moralist has not already said a thousand times far better. The fact is a world-fact. The application is a Christian one. Every man can be eloquent about the nothingness of time.

But the application! Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die? That is one application. Let us sentimentalize and be sad in this fleeting world, and talk of the instability of human greatness, and the transitoriness of human affection? Those are the only two applications the world knows. They shut out the recollection and are merry: or they dwell on it and are sad. Christian brethren, dwell on it and be happy. This world is not yours: thank God, it is not. It is dropping away from you like worn-out autumn leaves; but beneath it, hidden in it, there is another world lying as the flower lies in the bud. That is *your* world, which must burst forth at last into eternal luxuriance. All you stand on, see, and love, is but the husk of something better. Things are passing—our friends are dropping off from us: strength is giving way: our relish for earth is going, and the world no longer wears to our hearts the radiance that once it wore. We have the same sky above us, and the same scenes around us; but the freshness that our hearts extracted from everything in boyhood, and the glory that seemed to rest once on earth and life has faded away for ever. Sad and gloomy truths to the man who is going down to the grave with his work undone. Not sad to the Christian; but rousing, exciting, invigorating. If it be the eleventh hour, we have no time for folding of the hands: we will work the faster. Through the changefulness of life: through the solemn tolling of the bell of Time, which tells us that another, and another, and another, are gone before us: through the noiseless rush of a world which is going down with gigantic footsteps into nothingness. Let not the Christian slack his hand from work: for he that doeth the will of God may defy hell itself to quench his immortality.

Finally, The love of this world is only unlearned by the love of the Father. It were a desolate thing, indeed, to forbid the love of earth, if there were nothing to fill the vacant space in the heart. But it is just for this purpose, that a sublimer affection may find room, that the lower is to be expelled. And there is only one way in which that higher love is learned. The cross of Christ is the measure

of the love of God to us, and the measure of the meaning of man's existence. The measure of the love of God. Through the death-knell of a passing universe, God seems at least to speak to us in wrath. There is no doubt of what God means in the cross. He means love. The measure of the meaning of man's existence. Measure all by the cross. Do you want success? The cross is failure. Do you want a name? The cross is infamy. Is it to be gay and happy that you live? The cross is pain and sharpness. Do you live that the will of God may be done, in you and by you in life and death? Then and only then the Spirit of the cross is in you. When once a man has learned that, the power of the world is gone; and no man need bid him, in denunciation or in invitation, not to love the world. He cannot love the world: for he has got an ambition above the world. He has planted his foot upon the Rock, and when all else is gone, he at least abides for ever.

THE TONGUE

St. James iii. 5, 6.—"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

In the development of Christian Truth, a peculiar office was assigned to the Apostle James.

It was given to St. Paul to proclaim Christianity as the spiritual law of liberty, and to exhibit Faith as the most active principle within the breast of man. It was St. John's to say that the deepest quality in the bosom of Deity is Love; and to assert that the life of God in man is Love. It was the office of St. James to assert the majesty of Moral Rectitude: his very name marked him out peculiarly

for this office; he was emphatically called, "the Just:" integrity was his peculiar characteristic. A man singularly honest, earnest, real. Accordingly, if you read through his whole epistle, you will find it is, from first to last, one continued vindication of the first principles of morality against the *semblances* of religion.

He protested against the censoriousness which was found connected with peculiar claims of religious feelings. "If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." He protested against that spirit which had crept into the Christian Brotherhood, truckling to the rich, and despising the poor. "If ye have respect of persons ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." He protested against that sentimental fatalism which induced men to throw the blame of their own passions upon God. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot tempt to evil; neither tempteth He any man." He protested against that unreal religion of excitement which diluted the earnestness of real religion in the enjoyment of listening. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only; deceiving your own souls." He protested against that trust in the correctness of theological doctrine which neglected the cultivation of character. "What doth it profit, if a man *say* that he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?"

Read St. James's epistle through; this is the mind breathing through it all: all this *talk* about religion, and spirituality—words, words, words—nay, let us have *realities*.

It is well known that Luther complained of this epistle, that it did not contain the Gospel; for men who are hampered by a system will say—even of an inspired Apostle—that he does not teach the Gospel if their own favourite doctrine be not the central subject of his discourse; but St. James's reply seems spontaneously to suggest itself to us. The Gospel! how can we speak of the Gospel, when the

first principles of morality are forgotten? when Christians are excusing themselves, and slandering one another? How can the superstructure of Love and Faith be built, when the very foundations of human character—Justice, Mercy, Truth—have not been laid?

1st. The license of the tongue.

2nd. The guilt of that license.

The first license given to the tongue is slander. I am not, of course, speaking now of that species of slander against which the law of libel provides a remedy, but of that of which the Gospel alone takes cognisance; for the worst injuries which man can do to man, are precisely those which are too delicate for *law* to deal with. We consider, therefore, not the calumny which is reckoned such by the moralities of an earthly court, but that which is found guilty by the spiritualities of the courts of heaven; that is, the mind of God.

Now observe, this slander is compared in the text to poison—"the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." The deadliest poisons are those for which no test is known: there are poisons so destructive that a single drop insinuated into the veins produces death in three seconds, and yet no chemical science can separate that virus from the contaminated blood, and show the metallic particles of poison glittering palpably, and say, "Behold, it is there!"

In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spikes of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery.

In St. James's day, as now, it would appear that there were idle men and idle women, who went about from house to house, dropping slander as they went; and yet you could not take that slander and detect the venom there. You could not evaporate the truth in the slow process of the crucible, and then show the residuum of falsehood glittering

and visible. You could not fasten upon any word or sentence, and say that it was calumny; for in order to constitute slander it is not necessary that the word spoken should be *false*—half truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even necessary that a word should be distinctly uttered; a dropped lip, an arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance, nay, even an emphatic silence may do the work; and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief, has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, to fever human existence, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life. Very emphatically was it said by one whose whole being had smarted under such infliction, "Adder's poison is under their lips." The second license given to the tongue is in the way of persecution: "therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God." "We!"—men who bear the name of Christ—curse our brethren! Christians persecute Christians. Thus even in St. James's age that spirit had begun, the monstrous fact of Christian persecution; from that day it has continued, through long centuries up to the present time. The Church of Christ assumed the office of denunciation, and except in the first council, whose object was not to strain, but to relax the bonds of brotherhood, not a council has met for eighteen centuries which has not guarded each profession of belief by the too customary formula, "If any man maintain otherwise than this, let him be accursed."

Myriad, countless curses have echoed through those long ages: the Church has forgotten her Master's spirit and called down fire from heaven. A fearful thought to consider this as the spectacle on which the eye of God has rested. He looks down upon the creatures he has made, and hears everywhere the language of religious imprecations,—and who is proved right after all by curses?

The Church of Rome hurls her thunders against Protestants of every denomination: the Calvinist scarcely recognises the Arminian as a Christian: he who considers

himself as the true Anglican, excludes from the Church of Christ all but the adherents of his own orthodoxy; every small minister and congregation has its circle, beyond which all are heretics; nay, even among that sect which is most lax as to the dogmatic forms of truth, we find the Unitarian of the old school denouncing the spiritualism of the new and rising school.

This is the state of things to which we are arrived. Sisters of Charity refuse to permit an act of charity to be done by a Samaritan; ministers of the Gospel fling the thunderbolts of the Lord; ignorant hearers catch and exaggerate the spirit,—boys, girls, and women shudder as one goes by, perhaps more holy than themselves, who adores the same God, believes in the same Redeemer, struggles in the same life-battle, and all this because they have been taught to look upon him as an enemy of God.

There is a class of religious persons against whom this vehemence has been especially directed. No one who can read the signs of the times can help perceiving that we are on the eve of great changes, perhaps a disruption of the Church of England. Unquestionably there has been a large secession to the Church of Rome.

Now what has been the position of those who are about to take this step? They have been taunted with dishonest reception of the wages of the Church; a watch has been set over them: not a word they uttered in private, or in public, but was given to the world by some religious busybody; there was not a visit which they paid, not a foolish dress which they adopted, but became the subject of bitter scrutiny and malevolent gossip. For years the religious press has denounced them with a vehemence as virulent, but happily more impotent than that of the Inquisition. There has been an anguish and an inward struggle little suspected, endured by men who felt themselves outcasts in their own society, and naturally looked for a home elsewhere.

We congratulate ourselves that the days of persecution are gone by; but persecution is that which affixes penalties

upon *views held*, instead of upon *life led*. Is persecution *only* fire and sword? But suppose a man of sensitive feeling says, The sword is less sharp to me than the slander: fire is less intolerable than the refusal of sympathy!

Now let us bring this home: you rejoice that the faggot and the stake are given up;—*you* never persecuted—you leave that to the wicked Church of Rome. Yes, you never burned a human being alive—you never clapped your hands as the death-shriek proclaimed that the lion's fang had gone home into the most vital part of the victim's frame; but did you never rob him of his friends?—gravely shake your head and oracularly insinuate that he was leading souls to hell?—chill the affections of his family?—take from him his good name? Did you never with delight see his Church placarded as the Man of Sin, and hear the platform denunciations which branded it with the spiritual abominations of the Apocalypse? Did you never find a malicious pleasure in repeating all the miserable gossip with which religious slander fastened upon his daily acts, his words, and even his uncommunicated thoughts? Did you never forget that for a man to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling" is a matter difficult enough to be laid upon a human spirit, without intruding into the most sacred department of another's life—that, namely, which lies between himself and God? Did you never say that "it was to be wished he should go to Rome," until at last life became intolerable,—until he was thrown more and more in upon himself; found himself, like his Redeemer, in this world alone, but unable, like his Redeemer, calmly to repose upon the thought that his Father was with him? Then a stern defiant spirit took possession of his soul, and there burst from his lips, or heart, the wish for *rest*—rest at any cost, peace anywhere, if even it is to be found only in the bosom of the Church of Rome!

II. The guilt of this license.

The first evil consequence is the harm that a man does himself: "so is the tongue among the members, that it

defiles the whole body." It is not very obvious, in what way a man does himself harm by calumny. I will take the simplest form in which this injury is done; it effects a dissipation of spiritual energy. There are two ways in which the steam of machinery may find an outlet for its force: it may work, and if so it works silently; or it may escape, and that takes place loudly, in air and noise. There are two ways in which the spiritual energy of a man's soul may find its vent: it may express itself in action, silently; or in words, noisily: but just so much of force as is thrown into the one mode of expression, is taken from the other.

Few men suspect how much mere talk fritters away spiritual energy,—that which should be spent in action, spends itself in words. The fluent boaster is not the man who is steadiest before the enemy; it is well said to him that his courage is better kept till wanted. Loud utterance of virtuous indignation against evil, from the platform, or in the drawing-room, do not characterize the spiritual giant: so much indignation as is expressed, has found vent, is wasted, is taken away from the work of coping with evil; the man has so much less left. And hence he who restrains that love of talk, lays up a fund of spiritual strength.

With large significance, St. James declares, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." He is entire, powerful, because he has not spent his strength. In these days of loud profession, and bitter, fluent condemnation, it is well for us to learn the divine force of silence. Remember Christ in the Judgment Hall, the very Symbol and Incarnation of spiritual strength; and yet when revilings were loud around Him and charges multiplied, "He held His peace."

2. The next feature in the guilt of calumny is its uncontrollable character: "the tongue can no man tame." You cannot arrest a calumnious tongue, you cannot arrest the calumny itself; you may refute a slanderer, you may trace home a slander to its source, you may expose the author of it, you may by that exposure give a lesson so severe as to

make the repetition of the offence appear impossible; but the fatal habit is incorrigible: to-morrow the tongue is at its work again.

Neither can you stop the consequences of a slander; you may publicly prove its falsehood, you may sift every atom, explain and annihilate it, and yet, years after you had thought that all had been disposed of for ever, the mention of a name wakes up associations in the mind of some one who heard the calumny, but never heard or never attended to the refutation, or who has only a vague and confused recollection of the whole, and he asks the question doubtfully, "But were there not some suspicious circumstances connected with him?" It is like the Greek fire used in ancient warfare, which burnt unquenched beneath the water, or like the weeds which when you have extirpated them in one place are sprouting forth vigorously in another spot, at the distance of many hundred yards; or, to use the metaphor of St. James himself, it is like the wheel which catches fire as it goes, and burns with a fiercer conflagration as its own speed increases: "it sets on fire the whole course of nature" (literally, the wheel of nature). You may tame the wild beast, the conflagration of the American forest will cease when all the timber and the dry underwood is consumed; but you cannot arrest the progress of that cruel word which you uttered carelessly yesterday or this morning,—which you will utter, perhaps, before you have passed from this church one hundred yards: that will go on slaying, poisoning, burning beyond your own control, now and for ever.

3. The third element of guilt lies in the unnaturalness of calumny. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be;" *ought not*—that is, they are unnatural. That this is St. James's meaning is evident from the second illustration which follows: "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter?" "Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, or a vine, figs?"

There is apparently in these metaphors little that affords an argument against slander; the motive which they suggest would appear to many far-fetched and of small cogency; but

to one who looks on this world as a vast whole, and who has recognised the moral law as only a part of the great law of the universe, harmoniously blending with the whole, illustrations such as these are the most powerful of all arguments. The truest definition of evil is that which represents it as something contrary to nature: evil is evil, because it is unnatural; a vine which should bear olive berries, an eye to which blue seems yellow, would be diseased; an unnatural mother, an unnatural son, an unnatural act, is the strongest term of condemnation. It is this view which Christianity gives of moral evil: the teaching of Christ was the recall of man to nature, not an infusion of something new into humanity. Christ came to call out all the principles and powers of human nature, to restore the natural equilibrium of all our faculties; not to call us back to our own individual selfish nature, but to human nature as it was in God's ideal—the perfect type which is to be realized in us. Christianity is the regeneration of our nature, not the destruction of one atom of it.

Now the nature of man is to adore God and to love what is god-like in man. The office of the tongue is to bless. Slander is guilty because it contradicts this; yet even in slander itself, perversion as it is, the interest of man in man is still distinguishable. What is it but perverted interest which makes the acts, and words, and thoughts of his brethren, even in their evil, a matter of such strange delight? Remember, therefore, this contradicts your nature and your destiny; to speak ill of others makes you a monster in God's world: get the habit of slander, and then there is not a stream which bubbles fresh from the heart of nature,—there is not a tree that silently brings forth its genial fruit in its appointed season,—which does not rebuke and proclaim you to be a monstrous anomaly in God's world.

4. The fourth point in guilt is the diabolical character of slander; the tongue is set on fire of hell. Now, this is no mere strong expression—no mere indignant vituperation—it contains deep and emphatic meaning.

The apostle means literally what he says, slander is

diabolical. The first illustration we give of this is contained in the very meaning of the word devil. "Devil," in the original, means traducer or slanderer. The first introduction of a demon spirit is found connected with a slanderous insinuation against the Almighty, implying that His command had been given in envy of His creature: "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

In the magnificent imagery of the book of Job, the accuser is introduced with a demoniacal and malignant sneer, attributing the excellence of a good man to interested motives. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" There is another mode in which the fearful accuracy of St. James's charge may be demonstrated. There is one state only from which there is no recovery—there is but one sin that is unpardonable. The Pharisees beheld the works of Jesus. They could not deny that they were good works, they could not deny that they were miracles of beneficence, but rather than acknowledge that they were done by a good man through the co-operation of a Divine spirit, they preferred to account for them by the wildest and most incredible hypothesis; they were done by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. It was upon this occasion that our Redeemer said with solemn meaning, "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment." It was then that He said, for a word spoken against the Holy Ghost there is no forgiveness in this world, or in the world to come.

Our own hearts respond to the truth of this—to call evil, good, and good, evil—to see the Divinest good, and call it Satanic evil—below this lowest deep there is *not* a lower still. There is no cure for mortification of the flesh —there is no remedy for ossification of the heart. Oh! that miserable state, when to the jaundiced eye all good transforms itself into evil, and the very instruments of health become the poison of disease. Beware of every approach of this!—Beware of that spirit which controversy fosters, of watching only for the evil in the character of an antagonist!

—Beware of that habit which becomes the slanderer's life, of magnifying every speck of evil and closing the eye to goodness!—till at last men arrive at the state in which generous, universal love (which is heaven) becomes impossible, and a suspicious, universal hate takes possession of the heart, and *that* is hell!

There is one peculiar manifestation of this spirit to which I desire specially to direct your attention.

The politics of the community are guided by the political press. The religious views of a vast number are formed by that portion of the press which is called religious; it becomes, therefore, a matter of deepest interest to inquire what is the spirit of that "religious press." I am not asking you what are the views maintained—whether Evangelical, Anglican, or Romish—but what is the *spirit* of that fountain from which the religious life of so many is nourished?

Let any man cast his eye over the pages of this portion of the press—it matters little to which party the newspaper or the journal may belong—he will be startled to find the characters of those whom he has most deeply reverenced, whose hearts he knows, whose integrity and life are above suspicion, held up to scorn and hatred; the organ of one party is established against the organ of another, and it is the recognised office of each to point out with microscopic care the names of those whose views are to be shunned; and in order that these may be the more shrunk from, the characters of those who hold such opinions are traduced and vilified. There is no personality too mean—there is no insinuation too audacious or too false for the recklessness of these daring slanderers. I do not like to use the expression, lest it should appear to be merely one of theatrical vehemence; but I say it in all seriousness, adopting the inspired language of the Bible, and using it advisedly and with accurate meaning, the spirit which guides the "religious press" of this country, which dictates those personalities, which prevents controversialists from seeing what is good in their opponents, which attributes low motives to account for excellent lives, and teaches men

whom to suspect, and shun, rather than point out where it is possible to admire and love—is a spirit "set on fire of hell."

Before we conclude, let us get at the root of the matter. "Man," says the Apostle James, "was made in the image of God:" to slander man is to slander God; to love what is good in man is to love it in God. Love is the only remedy for slander: no set of rules or restrictions can stop it; we may denounce, but we shall denounce in vain. The radical cure of it is Charity—"out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned," to feel what is great in the human character; to recognise with delight all high, and generous, and beautiful actions; to find a joy even in seeing the good qualities of your bitterest opponents, and to admit those qualities even in those with whom you have least sympathy—be it either the Romanist or the Unitarian—this is the only spirit which can heal the love of slander and of calumny. If we would bless God, we must *first* learn to bless man, who is made in the image of God.

THE TRANSITORINESS OF LIFE

PSALM xc. 12.—"So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom."

THIS is the key-note of the 90th Psalm. It numbers sadly the days and vicissitudes of human life; but it does this, not for the sake of mere sentiment, but rather for practical purposes, that it may furnish a motive for a wiser life of the heart. We know nothing of the Psalm except that it was the composition of "Moses, the man of God." It was written evidently in the wilderness, after years of apparently fruitless wandering: its tone is that of deep sadness—retrospective; its images are borrowed from the

circumstances of the pilgrimage—the mountain-flood, the grass, the night-watch of an army on the march.

See here again, what is meant by inspiration. Observe the peculiarly human character of this Psalm. Moses, "the man of God," is commissioned not to tell truths superhuman, but truths emphatically human. The utterances of this Psalm are true to nature. Moses felt as we feel, only God gave him a voice to interpret, and he felt more deeply than all, what all in their measure feel. His inspiration lay not in this, that he was gifted with legislative wisdom; but rather in this, that his bosom vibrated truly and healthfully to every note of the still sad music of humanity.

We will consider—

I. The feelings suggested by a retrospect of the past.
II. The right direction of those feelings.

1. The analogies of nature which correspond with human life. All the images in this Psalm are suggested by the circumstances of their forty years' pilgrimage. Human life felt to be like a flood—the withering grass—a sleep broken—the pain—the start—death—the awakening—a night-watch—a tale told, whose progress we watched with interest, but of which when done, the impression alone remains, the words are gone for ever. These are not artificial images, but natural. They are not similes forced by the writer into his service because of their prettiness, but similes which forced themselves on him by their truthfulness. Now this is God's arrangement. All things here are double. The world without corresponds with the world within. No man could look on a stream when alone by himself, and all noisy companionship overpowering good thoughts was away, without the thought that just so his own particular current of life will fall at last into the "unfathomable gulf where all is still."

No man can look upon a field of corn, in its yellow ripeness, which he has passed weeks before when it was green, or a convolvulus withering as soon as plucked, without

experiencing a chastened feeling of the fleetingness of all earthly things.

No man ever went through a night-watch in the bivouac when the distant hum of men and the random shot fired told of possible death on the morrow; or watched in a sick room, when time was measured by the sufferer's breathing, or the intolerable ticking of the clock, without a firmer grasp on the realities of Life and Time.

So God walks His appointed rounds through the year: and every season and every sound has a special voice for the varying phases of our manifold existence. Spring comes, when earth unbosoms her mighty heart to God, and anthems of gratitude seem to ascend from every created thing. It is something deeper than an arbitrary connection which compels us to liken this to the thought of human youth.

And then comes Summer, with its full stationariness, its noontide heat, its dust, and toil, an emblem of ripe manhood.—The interests of youth are gone by.—The interest of a near grave has not yet come. Its duty, is work. And afterwards Autumn, with its mournfulness, its pleasant melancholy, tells us of coming rest and quiet calm.

And now has come Winter again. This is the last Sunday in the year.

It is not a mere preacher's voice performing an allotted task. The call and correspondence are real. The young have felt the melancholy of the last two months. With a transient feeling—even amounting to a luxury—the prophetic soul within us anticipates with sentiment the real gloom of later life, and enables us to sympathize with what we have not yet experienced. The old have felt it as no mere romance—an awful fact—a correspondence between the world without and the world within. We have all felt it in the damp mist, in the slanting shadows, the dimmer skies, the pale, watery glow of the red setting sun, shorn of half its lustre. In the dripping of the woodland, in the limp leaves trodden by heaps into clay, in the depressing north wind, in the sepulchral cough of the aged man at the corner

of the street under the inclement sky, God has said to us, as He said to Moses, "Pause, and number thy days, for they are numbered."

2. There is also a sense of loss. Every sentence tells us that this Psalm was written after a long period was past. It was retrospective, not prospective. Moses is looking back, and his feeling is *loss*. How much was lost? Into that flood of Time how much had fallen? Many a one consumed, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, by the wrath of God. Many a Hebrew warrior stricken in battle, and over him a sand-heap. And those who remembered these things were old men—"*consuming*," his strong expression, "their strength in labour and sorrow."

Such is life! At first, all seems given. We are acquiring associations—sensations—new startling feelings; then comes the time when all give pleasure or pain by association—by touching some old chord, which vibrates again. And, after that, all is loss—something gone, and more is going. Every day, every year—this year, like all others. Into that flood have fallen treasures that will not be recovered. Intimacies have been dissolved that will not be reunited. Affections cooled, we cannot say why. Many a ship foundered, and the brave hearts in her will be seen no more till the sea shall give up her dead. Many a British soldier fallen before Asiatic pestilence, or beneath the Kaffir assegai, above him the bush or jungle is waving green, but he himself is now where the rifle's ring is heard, and the sabre's glitter is seen, no more. Many a pew before me is full, which at the beginning of the year was filled by others. Many a hearthstone is cold, and many a chair is empty that will not be filled again. We stand upon the shore of that illimitable sea which never restores what has once fallen into it; we hear only the boom of the waves that throb over all —for ever.

3. There is, too, an apparent non-attainment.

A deeper feeling prevades this Psalm than that of mere transitoriness: it is that of the impotency of human effort. "We are consumed"—perish aimlessly like the grass. No

man was more likely to feel this than Moses. After forty years, the slaves he had emancipated were in heart slaves still—idolaters. He called them rebels, and shattered the stone tables of the Law, in sad and bitter disappointment. After forty years, the Promised Land was not reached. He himself never entered it.

No wonder if Life appeared to him like a stream, not merely transitory, but monotonous. Generation after generation, and no change; much lost, apparently nothing was won. No prospect of better time had been. "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be." Here, too, is one of the great trials of all retrospect—the great trial of all earthly life.

The cycles of God's providences are so large that our narrow lives scarcely measure a visible portion of them. So large that we ask, What can we effect? Yet there is an almost irrepressible wish in our hearts to see success attend our labours, to enter the Promised Land in our own life. It is a hard lesson: to toil in faith, and to die in the wilderness, not having attained the promises, but only seeing them afar off.

So in the past year, personally and publicly. Personally we dare not say that we are better than we were at the beginning. Can we say that we are purer? more earnest? Has the lesson of the Cross been cut sharply into our hearts? Have we learnt only self-denial, to say nothing of self-sacrifice? And stagnation thus being apparently the case, or, at most, but very slow progress, the thought comes, Can such beings be destined for immortality?

On a larger scale, the young cries of Freedom which caused all generous hearts to throb with sympathy have been stifled; itself trodden down beneath the iron heel of despotism all over Europe and rendered frantic and ferocious. Can we wish for its success? Are there better times coming at all? So does the heart sicken over the Past. Every closing year seems to say, Shall we begin the old useless struggle over again? Shall we tell again the oft-told tale? Are not these hopes, so high, a mockery to a

moth like man? Is all but a mere illusion, a mirage in the desert? Are the waters of life and home ever near, yet never reached, and the dry hot desert sand his only attainment?

Let us consider—

II. The right use of these sad suggestions. "So teach us to number our days."

"So," because the days may be numbered, as in this Psalm, and the heart *not* applied to wisdom. There are two ways in which days may be numbered to no purpose.

1. That of the Epicurean—"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."

There is a strong tendency to reckless enjoyment when the time is felt to be short, and religion does not exist to restrain.

[For example. In times of plague.—Athens.—Milan.—London.—Danger only stimulates men to seize to-day the enjoyments which may not be theirs to-morrow. Again, at the close of the last century, when the prisons of Paris resounded with merriment, dance, and acting, a light and trivial people, atheists at heart, could extract from an hourly impending death no deeper lesson than this, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."]

2. That of the sentimentalist.

It is no part of our Christian duty to think of decay in an abject spirit. That which the demoniac in the Gospels did, having his dwelling among the tombs, has sometimes been reckoned the perfection of Christian unworldliness. Men have looked on every joy as a temptation; on every earnest pursuit as a snare—the skull and the hour-glass their companions, curtaining life with melancholy, haunting it with visions and emblems of mortality. This is not Christianity.

Rather it is so to dwell on thoughts of death "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." If the history of these solemn truths does not stimulate us to duty and action,

it were no duty to remind ourselves of them. Rather the reverse. Better shut out such gloomy and useless thoughts. But there is a way of dwelling amidst these facts which solemnizes life instead of paralyzing it. He is best prepared to meet change who sees it at a distance and contemplates it calmly. Affections are never deepened and refined until the possibility of loss is felt. Duty is done with all energy, then only, when we feel, "The night cometh, when no man can work," in all its force.

Two thoughts are presented to make this easier.

I. The Eternity of God. "Before the mountains were brought forth, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." With God there is no Time—it is one Eternal Now. This is made conceivable to us by a recent writer, who has reminded us that there are spots in the universe which have not yet been reached by the beams of light which shone from this earth at its creation. If, therefore, we were able on an angel's wings to reach that spot in a second or two of time, the sight of this globe would be just becoming visible as it was when chaos passed into beauty. A few myriads of miles nearer, we should be met by the picture of the world in the state of Deluge. And so, in turn, would present themselves the spectacles of Patriarchal Life; of Assyrian, Grecian, Persian, Roman civilisation; and, at a short distance from the earth, the scenes of yesterday. Thus, a mere transposition in space would make the Past present. And thus, all that we need, is the annihilation of Space to annihilate Time. So that if we conceive a Being present everywhere in Space, to Him all past events would be present. At the remotest extremity of the angel's journey, he would see the world's creation. At this extremity, the events that pass before our eyes to-day. Omnipresence in Space is thus equivalent to ubiquity in Time. And to such a being, demonstrably, there would be no Time. All would be one vast Eternal Now.

Apply this to practical wisdom. And this comes in to correct our despondency. For with God, "a thousand years are as one day." In the mighty cycles in which God works,

our years and ages are moments. It took fifteen hundred years to educate the Jewish nation. We wonder that Moses saw nothing in forty years. But the thought of the Eternity of God was his consolation. And so, shall we give up our hopes of heaven and progress, because it is so slow, when we remember that God has innumerable ages before Him? Or our hopes for our personal improvement, when we recollect our immortality in Him who has been our refuge "from generation to generation?" Or for our schemes and plans which seem to fail, when we remember that they will grow after us, like the grass above our graves?

II. Next, consider the permanence of results. Read the conclusion of the Psalm, "Prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us, O prosper Thou our handiwork." It is a bright conclusion for a Psalm so dark and solemn. To correct the gloom that comes from brooding on decay, it is good to remember that there is a sense in which nothing perishes.

1. The permanence of our past seasons. Spring, summer, autumn, are gone, but the harvest is gathered in. Youth and manhood are passed, but their lessons have been learnt. The past is ours only when it is gone. We do not understand the meaning of our youth, our joys, our sorrows, till we look at them from a distance. We lose them to get them back again in a deeper way. The past is our true inheritance, which nothing can take from us. Its sacred lessons, its pure affections, are ours for ever. Nothing but the annihilation of our being could rob us of them.

2. The permanence of lost affections. Over the departed ones Moses mourned. But take his own illustration—"A tale that is told." The sound and words are gone, but the tale is indelibly impressed on the heart. So the lost are not really lost. Perhaps they are ours only truly when lost. Their patience, love, wisdom, are sacred now, and live in us. The Apostles and Prophets are more ours than they were the property of the generation who saw their daily life—"He being dead, yet speaketh."

3. The permanence of our own selves—"The beauty of

the Lord our God be upon us." Very striking this. We survive. We are what the past has made us. The results of the Past are ourselves. The perishable emotions, and the momentary acts of bygone years, are the scaffolding on which we build up the being that we are. As the tree is fertilized by its own broken branches and fallen leaves, and grows out by its own decay, so is the soul of man ripened out of broken hopes and blighted affections. The law of our Humanity is the common law of the universe. Life out of death, Beauty out of decay. Not till those fierce young passions, over the decay of which the old man grieves, have been stilled into silence; not until the eye has lost its fire, and the cheek its hot flush, can "the Beauty of the Lord our God be upon us"—the Beauty of a spirit subdued, chastened, and purified by loss.

4. Let us correct these sad thoughts by the thought of the permanence of work. "Prosper thou the *work* of our hands." Feelings pass, thoughts and imaginations pass: Dreams pass: Work remains. Through eternity, what you have done, that you are. They tell us that not a sound has ever ceased to vibrate through space; that not a ripple has ever been lost upon the ocean. Much more is it true that not a true thought, nor a pure resolve, nor a loving act, has ever gone forth in vain.

So then will we end our year.

Amidst the solemn lessons taught to the giddy traveller as he journeys on by a Nature hastening with gigantic footsteps down to a winter grave, and by the solemn tolling of the bell of Time, which tells us that another, and another, and another, is gone before us, we will learn, not the lesson of the sensualist—enjoy while you can: not that of the feeble sentimentalist—mourn, for nothing lasts: but that of the Christian—work cheerfully.

"The beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

"O prosper Thou our handiwork."

VIEWS OF DEATH

ECCLES. ii. 15, 16.—"Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity. For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man?* as the fool."

THIS is the inspired record of a peculiar view of life. Paul, with his hopefulness of disposition, could not have written it, neither could John, with his loving, trustful spirit. We involuntarily ask who wrote this? Was it written by a Voluptuary?—a Sceptic?—or a Philosopher? What sort of man was it? We detect the sated voluptuary in the expressions of the first eleven verses of this chapter. We see the sceptic in those of the 19th to the 22nd verses of the third chapter. And the philosopher who in avoidance of all extremes seeks the golden medium, is manifested in such a maxim as "Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?"—Or was it written by a man deeply and permanently inspired?

I believe it to have been written by none of these, or rather by all four. It records different experiences of the same mind—different moods in which he viewed life in different ways. It is difficult to interpret, or to separate them; for he says nothing by which they can be marked off and made distinct from each other. Nowhere does Solomon say, "I thought so then, but that was only a mood, a phase of feeling that I have since seen was false, and is now corrected by the experience and expressions of the present." Here is, at first sight, nothing but inextricable confusion and false conclusions.

The clue to the whole is to be found in the interpreter's own heart. It is necessary to make these few preliminary

remarks, as there is a tone of disappointment which runs through all this book, which is not the tone of the Bible in general. Two lines of thought are suggested by the text.

I. The mysterious aspect presented by death.
II. That state of heart in which it is mysterious no longer.

I. To Solomon, in his mood of darkness, "there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever." But it is not only in moods of dark perplexity, it is *always* a startling thing to see the rapidity with which the wisest and the best are forgotten. We plough our lives in water, leaving no furrow; two little waves break upon the shore, but no further vestige of our existence is left.

[An accident happens to one of England's greatest sons; an announcement is made, which stagnates the blood in a country's veins for a moment, and then all returns to its former channel.—(Tennyson.) "In Memoriam." "Let them rave," he sleeps well.

Country church-yard—yew-tree—upheaving roots clasping round bones—a striking fact that vegetable life outlives and outlasts animal life.]

There is something exquisitely painful in the thought that we die out and are forgotten; therefore it is, that in the higher walks of life people solace themselves with the hope of posthumous reputation; they think, perhaps, that *then* only their true worth will be known. That posthumous reputation: when the eye is for ever closed, and the heart for ever chilled here—what matters it to him, whether storms rage over his grave or men cherish his memory? he sleeps well. The commentators on this book have disagreed among themselves about Solomon's character—some have even doubted whether he was finally saved or no. What matters it to him now what is said of him? what does it signify to him what posterity thinks of him? And

so with us all: to the ear that is turned into dust the voice of praise or of censure is indifferent. One thing is certain. God says, "Time is short, eternity is long." The solemn tolling of the bell seems to cry, There is something to be done; there is much to be done;—do it! and that quickly!

Then again, there are some who say, "What use is there in doing anything in this world? It scarcely seems worth while, in this brief span of life, to try to do anything." A man is placed in a high situation, receives an expensive education at school and college, and a still more expensive one of time and experience. And then, just when we think all this ripe wisdom, garnered up from so many fields, shall find its fullest use, we hear that all is over, he has passed from among us, and then the question, hideous in its suggestiveness, arises, "Why was he then more wise?"

Asked from this world's stand-point—if there is no life beyond the grave, if there is no immortality, if all spiritual calculation is to end here, why, then, the mighty work of God is all to end in nothingness: but if this is only a state of infancy, only the education for eternity, in which the soul is to gain its wisdom and experience for higher work, then to ask why such a mind is taken from us is just as absurd as to question why the tree of the forest has its first training in the nursery garden. This is but the nursery ground, from whence we are to be transplanted into the great forest of God's eternal universe. There is an absence of all distinction between the death of one man and another. The wise man dies as the fool with respect to circumstances.

In our short-sightedness we think there ought to be a certain correspondence between the man and the mode of the man's death. We fancy the warrior should die upon the battle-plain, the statesman at his post, the mean man should die in ignorance; but it is not so ordered in God's world, for the wise man dies as the fool, the profligate man dies as the hero. Sometimes for the great and wise is reserved a contemptuous death, a mere accident; *then*, he who is not

satisfied unless the external reality corresponds with the inward hope, imagines that circumstances such as these cannot be ordained by Eternal Love, but rather by the spirit of a mocking demon.

There is always a disappointment of our expectations. No man ever lived whose acts were not smaller than himself. We often look forward to the hour of death in which a man shall give vent to his greater and nobler emotions. The hour comes, and the wise man dies as the fool. In the first place, in the case of holiness and humbleness, thoughts of deep despondency and dark doubt often gather round the heart of the Christian in his last hour, and the narrow-minded man interprets that into God's forgetfulness; or else delirium shrouds all in silence; or else there are only commonplace words, words tender, touching, and gentle, but in themselves nothing. Often there is nothing that marks the great man from the small man. *This* is the mystery of death.

II. It depends on causes within us and not without us. Three things are said by the man of pleasure :—1. That all things happen by chance. 2. That there is nothing new. 3. That all is vanity and nothing is stable.

There is a strange special penalty which God annexes to a life of pleasure: Everything appears to the worldly man as a tangled web—a maze to which there is no clue. Another man says, "There is nothing new under the sun." This is the state of the man who lives merely for excitement and pleasure—his heart becomes so jaded by excitement, that the world contains nothing for him which can awaken fresh or new emotions. Then, again, a third says, "All is vanity." This is the state of him who is afloat on the vast ocean of excitement, and who feels that life is nothing but a fluctuating, changeful, heartless scene.

Some who read the Book of Ecclesiastes think that there is a sadness and uneasiness in its tone inconsistent with the idea of inspiration, that it is nothing but a mere kaleidoscope, with endlessly shifting moods. Therein lies the

proof of its inspiration. Its value lies as much in the way of warning as of precept. Live for yourself here—live the mere life of pleasure, and then all is confusion and bewilderment of mind; then the view which the mighty mind of Solomon took, inspired by God, will be yours: life will seem as nothing, and death a mere mockery. Be in harmony with the mind of Christ, have the idea He had, be one with Him, and you shall understand the machinery of this world. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." To the humble pious heart there is no mystery. The world is intelligible only to a mind in harmony with the Mind that made it. Else all is confusion, unless you are in possession of His idea, moved by His Spirit.

Hence, it lies in a pure heart much more than in a clear intellect, to understand the mystery of life and death. Solomon's wisdom has left us only a confused idea.

Turn we now from the views of Solomon to the Life of the Son of Man. Men asked, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" He gave a different explanation of His wisdom. "My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

He gives directions to us how to gain the same discernment. "If any man will do His will, he shall know."

* * * * *

[One has just been taken from us to whom all eyes turned—Sir Robert Peel.]

THE POWER OF SORROW

2 CORINTHIANS vii. 9, 10.—"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

THAT which is chiefly insisted on in this verse, is the distinction between sorrow and repentance. To grieve over sin is one thing, to repent of it is another.

The apostle rejoiced, not that the Corinthians sorrowed, but that they sorrowed unto repentance. Sorrow has two results; it may end in spiritual life, or in spiritual death; and, in themselves, one of these is as natural as the other. Sorrow may produce two kinds of reformation—a transient, or a permanent one—an alteration in habits, which, originating in emotion, will last so long as that emotion continues, and then, after a few fruitless efforts, be given up,—a repentance which will be repented of; or, again, a permanent change, which will be reversed by no after thought—a repentance not to be repented of. Sorrow is, in itself, therefore, a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth developes the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hot-house, a great power also in the coffin; it expands the leaf, matures the fruits, adds precocious vigour to vegetable life, and warmth too; developes, with tenfold rapidity, the weltering process of dissolution. So too with sorrow. There are spirits in which it developes the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay. Our subject therefore is the twofold power of sorrow.

I. The fatal power of the sorrow of the world.
II. The life-giving power of the sorrow that is after God.

The simplest way in which the sorrow of the world works death, is seen in the effect of mere regret for worldly loss. There are certain advantages with which we come into the world. Youth, health, friends, and sometimes property. So long as these are continued we are happy; and, because happy, fancy ourselves very grateful to God. We bask in the sunshine of his gifts, and this pleasant sensation of sunning ourselves in life we call religion; that state in which we all are before sorrow comes, to test the temper of the metal of which our souls are made, when the spirits are unbroken and the heart buoyant, when a fresh morning is to a young heart what it is to the skylark. The exuberant burst of joy seems a spontaneous hymn to the Father of all blessing, like the matin carol of the bird; but this is not religion: it is the instinctive utterance of happy feeling, having as little of moral character in it, in the happy human being, as in the happy bird. Nay more—the religion which is only sunned into being by happiness, is a suspicious thing: having been warmed by joy, it will become cold when joy is over; and then, when these blessings are removed, we count ourselves hardly treated, as if we had been defrauded of a right; rebellious, hard feelings come; then it is you see people become bitter, spiteful, discontented. At every step in the solemn path of life, something must be mourned which will come back no more; the temper that was so smooth becomes rugged and uneven; the benevolence that expanded upon all, narrows into an ever dwindling selfishness—we are alone; and then that death-like loneliness deepens as life goes on. The course of man is downwards, and he moves with slow and ever more solitary steps, down to the dark silence—the silence of the grave. This is the death of heart; the sorrow of the world has worked death.

Again, there is a sorrow of the world, when sin is grieved for in a worldly spirit. There are two views of sin: in one

it is looked upon as wrong—in the other, as producing loss —loss, for example, of character. In such cases, if character could be preserved before the world, grief would not come; but the paroxysms of misery fall upon our proud spirit when our guilt is made public. The most distinct instance we have of this is in the life of Saul. In the midst of his apparent grief, the thing still uppermost was that he had forfeited his kingly character: almost the only longing was, that Samuel should honour him before his people. And hence it comes to pass, that often remorse and anguish only begin with exposure. Suicide takes place, not when the act of wrong is done, but when the guilt is known, and hence, too many a one becomes hardened who would otherwise have remained tolerably happy; in consequence of which we blame the exposure, not the guilt; we say, if it had been hushed up, all would have been well; that the servant who robbed his master was ruined by taking away his character; and that if the sin had been passed over, repentance might have taken place, and he might have remained a respectable member of society. Do not think so. It is quite true that remorse was produced by exposure, and that the remorse was fatal; the sorrow which worked death arose from that exposure, and so far exposure may be called the cause: had it never taken place, respectability, and comparative peace, might have continued; but outward respectability is not change of heart.

It is well known that the corpse has been preserved for centuries in the iceberg, or in antiseptic peat; and that when atmospheric air was introduced to the exposed surface, it crumbled into dust. Exposure worked dissolution, but it only manifested the death which was already there; so with sorrow, it is not the living heart which drops to pieces, or crumbles into dust, when it is revealed. Exposure did not work death in the Corinthian sinner, but life.

There is another form of grief for sin, which the apostle would not have rejoiced to see; it is when the hot tears come from pride. No two tones of feeling, apparently similar, are more unlike than that in which Saul exclaimed,

"I have played the fool exceedingly," and that in which the Publican cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The charge of folly brought against oneself only proves that we feel bitterly for having lost our own self-respect. It is a humiliation to have forfeited the idea which a man had formed of his own character—to find that the very excellence on which he prided himself, is the one in which he has failed. If there were a virtue for which Saul was conspicuous, it was generosity; yet it was exactly in this point of generosity in which he discovered himself to have failed, when he was overtaken on the mountain, and his life spared by the very man whom he was hunting to the death, with feelings of the meanest jealousy. Yet there was no real repentance there; there was none of that in which a man is sick of state and pomp. Saul could still rejoice in regal splendour, go about complaining of himself to the Ziphites, as if he was the most ill-treated and friendless of mankind; he was still jealous of his reputation, and anxious to be well thought of. Quite different is the tone in which the Publican, who felt himself a sinner, asked for mercy. He heard the contumelious expression of the Pharisee, "this Publican." With no resentment, he meekly bore it as a matter naturally to be taken for granted—"he did not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven;" he was as a worm which turns in agony, but not revenge, upon the foot which treads it into the dust.

Now this sorrow of Saul's, too, works death: no merit can restore self-respect; when once a man has found himself out, he cannot be deceived again. The heart is as a stone: a speck of canker corrodes and spreads within. What on this earth remains, but endless sorrow, for him who has ceased to respect himself, and has no God to turn to?

II. The divine power of sorrow.

1. It works repentance. By repentance is meant, in Scripture, change of life, alteration of habits, renewal of heart. This is the aim and meaning of all sorrow. The consequences of sin are meant to wean from sin. The penalty annexed to it is, in the first instance, corrective, not

penal. Fire burns the child, to teach it one of the truths of this universe—the property of fire to burn. The first time it cuts its hand with a sharp knife, it has gained a lesson which it never will forget. Now, in the case of pain, this experience is seldom, if ever, in vain. There is little chance of a child forgetting that fire will burn, and that sharp steel will cut; but the moral lessons contained in the penalties annexed to wrong-doing are just as truly intended, though they are by no means so unerring in enforcing their application. The fever in the veins and the headache which succeed intoxication, are meant to warn against excess. On the first occasion they are simply corrective; in every succeeding one they assume more and more a penal character in proportion as the conscience carries with them the sense of ill desert.

Sorrow, then, has done its work when it deters from evil; in other words, when it works repentance. In the sorrow of the world, the obliquity of the heart towards evil is not cured; it seems as if nothing cured it: heartache and trials come in vain; the history of life at last is what it was at first. The man is found erring where he erred before. The same course, begun with the certainty of the same desperate end which has taken place so often before.

They have reaped the whirlwind, but they will again sow the wind. Hence, I believe, that life-giving sorrow is less remorse for that which is irreparable, than anxiety to save that which remains. The sorrow that ends in death hangs in funeral weeds over the sepulchres of the past. Yet the present does not become more wise. Not one resolution is made more firm, nor one habit more holy. Grief is all. Whereas sorrow avails *only* when the past is converted into experience, and from failure lessons are learned which never are to be forgotten.

2. Permanence of alteration; for after all, a steady reformation is a more decisive test of the value of mourning than depth of grief.

The susceptibility of emotion varies with individuals. Some men feel intensely, others suffer less keenly; but this

is constitutional, belonging to nervous temperament, rather than moral character. *This* is the characteristic of the divine sorrow, that it is a repentance "not repented of;" no transient, short-lived resolutions, but sustained resolve.

And the beautiful law is, that in proportion as the repentance increases the grief diminishes. "I rejoice," says Paul, that "I made you sorry, though it were *but for a time.*" Grief for a time, repentance for ever. And few things more signally prove the wisdom of this apostle than his way of dealing with this grief of the Corinthian. He tried no artificial means of intensifying it—did not urge the duty of dwelling upon it, magnifying it, nor even of gauging and examining it. So soon as grief had done its work, the apostle was anxious to dry useless tears—he even feared lest haply such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. "A true penitent," says Mr. Newman, "never forgives himself." O false estimate of the gospel of Christ, and of the heart of man! A proud remorse does not forgive itself the forfeiture of its own dignity; but it is the very beauty of the penitence which is according to God, that at last the sinner, realizing God's forgiveness, does learn to forgive himself. For what other purpose did St. Paul command the Church of Corinth to give ecclesiastical absolution, but in order to afford a symbol and assurance of the Divine pardon, in which the guilty man's grief should not be overwhelming, but that he should become reconciled to himself? What is meant by the Publican's going *down to his house* justified, but that he felt at peace with himself and God?

3. It is sorrow with God—here called godly sorrow; in the margin, sorrowing according to God.

God sees sin not in its consequences but in itself; a thing infinitely evil, even if the consequences were happiness to the guilty instead of misery. So sorrow according to God, is to see sin as God sees it. The grief of Peter was as bitter as that of Judas. He went out and wept bitterly; how bitterly none can tell but they who have learned to look on sin as God does. But in Peter's grief there was an

element of hope; and that sprung precisely from this—that he saw God in it all. Despair of self did not lead to despair of God.

This is the great, peculiar feature of this sorrow: God is there, accordingly self is less prominent. It is not a microscopic self-examination, nor a mourning in which self is ever uppermost: *my* character gone; the greatness of *my* sin; the forfeiture of *my* salvation. The thought of God absorbs all that. I believe the feeling of true penitence would express itself in such words as these:—There *is* a righteousness, though I have not attained it. There is a purity, and a love, and a beauty, though my life exhibits little of it. In that I can rejoice. Of that I can feel the surpassing loveliness. My doings? They are worthless, I cannot endure to think of them. I am not thinking of them, I have something else to think of. There, there; in that Life I see it. And so the Christian—gazing not on what he is, but on what he desires to be—dares in penitence to say, That Righteousness is mine: dares, even when the recollection of his sin is most vivid and most poignant, to say with Peter, thinking less of himself than of God, and sorrowing as it were with God—"Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

THE VICTORY OF FAITH

1 JOHN v. 4, 5.—"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

THERE are two words in the system of Christianity which have received a meaning so new, and so emphatic, as to be in a way peculiar to it, and to distinguish it from all other systems of morality and religion; these two words are—the

World, and Faith. We find it written in Scripture that to have the friendship of the world is to be the enemy of God —whereupon the question arises—The World?—did not God make the world? Did He not place us in the world? Are we not to love what God has made? And yet meeting this distinctly we have the inspired record, "Love not the World."

The object of the Statesman is, or ought to be, to produce as much worldly prosperity as possible — but Christianity, that is Christ, speaks little of this world's prosperity, underrates it—nay, speaks of it at times as infinitely dangerous.

The legislator prohibits crime—the moralist transgression —the religionist sin. To these Christianity superadds a new enemy—the world and the things of the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The other word used in a peculiar sense is Faith. It is impossible for any one to have read his Bible ever so negligently, and not to be aware that the word Faith, or the grace of Faith, forms a large element in the Christian system. It is said to work miracles, remove mountains, justify the soul, trample upon impossibilities. Every apostle, in his way, assigns to faith a primary importance. Jude tells us to "build up ourselves in our most holy faith." John tells us that—"he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is the born of God;" and Paul tells us that, not by merit nor by works, but by trust or reliance only, can be formed that state of soul by which man is reckoned just before God. In these expressions, the apostles only develope their Master's meaning, when He uses such words as these, "All things are possible to him that believeth:" "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

These two words are brought into diametrical opposition in the text, so that it branches into a two-fold line of thought.

I. The Christian's enemy, the world.
II. The victory of Faith.

In endeavouring to understand first what is meant by the world, we shall feel that the mass of evil which is comprehended under this expression, cannot be told out in any one sermon; it is an expression used in various ways, sometimes meaning one thing, sometimes meaning another; but we will endeavour to explain its general principles—and these we will divide into three heads; first, the tyranny of the present; secondly, the tyranny of the sensual; and lastly, the spirit of society.

1. The tyranny of the present.

"Christ," says the Apostle Paul, "hath redeemed us from this present evil world;" and again, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Let a stress be laid on the word *present*. Worldliness is the attractive power of something present in opposition to something to come. It is this rule and tyranny of the present that constitutes Demas a worldly man.

In this respect, worldliness is the spirit of childhood carried on into manhood. The child lives in the present hour—to-day to him is everything. The holiday promised at a distant interval is no holiday at all—it must be either now or never. Natural in the child, and therefore pardonable, this spirit, when carried on into manhood, is coarse—is worldliness. The most distinct illustration given us of this, is the case of Esau. Esau came from the hunting-field worn and hungry; the only means of procuring the tempting mess of his brother's pottage was the sacrifice of his father's blessing, which in those ages carried with it a substantial advantage; but that birthright could be enjoyed only after *years*—the *pottage* was *present*, near, and certain; therefore he sacrificed a future and higher blessing, for a present and lower pleasure. For this reason Esau is the Bible type of worldliness: he is called in Scripture a profane, that is, not a distinctly vicious, but a secular or worldly person—an overgrown child; impetuous, inconsistent, not without gleams of generosity and kindliness, but ever accustomed to immediate gratification.

In this worldliness, moreover, is to be remarked the

gamester's desperate play. There is a gambling spirit in human nature. Esau distinctly expresses this: "Behold I am at the point to die, and what shall my birthright profit me?" He might never live to enjoy his birthright; but the pottage was before him, present, certain, *there*.

Now, observe the utter powerlessness of mere preaching to cope with this tyrannical power of the present. Forty thousand pulpits throughout the land this day, will declaim against the vanity of riches, the uncertainty of life, the sin of worldliness—against the gambling spirit of human nature; I ask what *impression* will be produced by those forty thousand harangues? In every congregation it is reducible to a certainty that, before a year is passed, some will be numbered with the dead. Every man knows this, but he thinks the chances are that it will not be himself; he feels it a solemn thing for humanity generally—but for himself there is more than a chance. Upon this chance he plays away life.

It is so with the child: you tell him of the consequences of to-day's idleness—but the sun is shining brightly, and he cannot sacrifice to-day's pleasure, although he knows the disgrace it will bring to-morrow. So it is with the intemperate man: he says—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil, and the good thereof; let me have my portion now."

So that one great secret of the world's victory lies in the mighty power of saying "*Now*."

2. The tyranny of the sensual.

I call it *tyranny*, because the evidences of the senses are all powerful, in spite of the protestations of the reason. In vain you try to persuade the child that *he* is moving, and not the trees which seem to flit past the carriage—in vain we remind ourselves that this apparently solid earth on which we stand, and which seems so immoveable, is in reality flying through the regions of space with an inconceivable rapidity—in vain philosophers would persuade us that the colour which the eye beholds, resides not in the object itself, but in our own perception; we are victims of the apparent, and the verdict of the senses is taken instead of

the verdict of the reason. Precisely so is it with the enjoyments of the world. The man who died yesterday, and whom the world called a successful man—for what did he live?—He lived for this world—he gained this world. Houses, land, name, position in society—all that earth could give of enjoyments—he had: he was the man of whom the Redeemer said that his thoughts were occupied in planning how to pull down his barns and build greater. We hear men complain of the sordid love of gold, but gold is merely a medium of exchange for other things: gold is land, titles, name, comfort—all that the world can give. If the world be *all*, it is *wise* to live for gold. There may be some little difference in the degree of degradation in different forms of worldliness; it is possible that the ambitious man who lives for power is somewhat higher than he who merely lives for applause, and he again may be a trifle higher than the mere seeker after gold—but after all, looking closely at the matter, you will find that, in respect of the objects of their idolatry, they agree in this, that all belong to the present. Therefore, says the Apostle, all that is in the world—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but of the world," and are only various forms of one great tyranny. And then when such a man is at the brink of death, the words said to the man in our Lord's parable must be said to him. "Thou fool, the houses thou hast built, the enjoyments thou hast prepared; and all those things which have formed thy life for years—when thy soul is taken from them, what shall they profit thee?"

3. The spirit of society.

The *World* has various meanings in Scripture; it does not always mean the Visible, as opposed to the Invisible; nor the Present, as opposed to the Future: it sometimes stands for the secular spirit of the day—the voice of society.

Our Saviour says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." The apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world;" and to the Gentiles he writes, "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience." In

these verses, a tone, a temper, a spirit is spoken of. There are two things—the Church and the World—two spirits pervading different bodies of men, brought before us in these verses—those called the Spirit-born, and those called the world, which is to be overcome by the Spirit-born, as in the text, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Let us understand what is meant by the Church of God. When we speak of the Church we generally mean a society to aid men in their progress God-wards; but the Church of God is by no means co-extensive in any age with that organized institution which we *call* the Church; sometimes it is nearly co-extensive—that is, nearly all on earth who are born of God are found within its pale, nearly all who are of the world are extraneous to it—but sometimes the born of God have been found distinct from the Institution called the Church, opposed to it—persecuted by it. The Institution of the Church is a blessed ordinance of God, organized on earth for the purpose of representing the eternal Church and of extending its limits, but still ever subordinate to it.

The Eternal Church is "the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven;" the selected spirits of the Most High, who are struggling with the evil of their day; sometimes alone, like Elijah, and, like him, longing that their work was done; sometimes, conscious of their union with each other. God is for ever raising up a succession of these—His brave, His true, His good. Apostolical succession, as taught sometimes, means simply this—a succession of miraculous powers flowing in a certain line. The true apostolic succession is—not a succession in a hereditary line, or line marked by visible signs which men can always identify, but a succession emphatically spiritual. The Jews looked for a hereditary succession; they thought that because they were Abraham's seed, the spiritual succession was preserved; the Redeemer told them that "God was able of those stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Therefore is this ever a spiritual succession—in the hands of God alone; and they are here called the

God-born, coming into the world variously qualified; sometimes baptized with the spirit which makes them, like James and John, the "Sons of Thunder," sometimes with a milder spirit, as Barnabas, which makes them "Sons of Consolation," sometimes having their souls indurated into an adamantine hardness, which makes them living stones—rocks like Peter, against which the billows of this world dash themselves in vain, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. But whether as apostles, or visitors of the poor, or parents of a family, born to do a work on earth, to speak a word, to discharge a mission which they themselves perhaps do not know till it is accomplished—these are the Church of God—the children of the Most High—the noble army of the Spirit-born! Opposed to this stands the mighty confederacy called the world. But beware of fixing on individual men in order to stigmatize *them* as the world. You may not draw a line and say—"We are the sons of God, ye are of the world." The world is not so much individual as it is a certain spirit; the course of this world is "the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience." The world and the Church are annexed as inseparably as the elements which compose the atmosphere. Take the smallest portion of it that you will in a cubic inch, the same proportions are found as in a temple. In the ark there was a Ham; in the small band of the twelve apostles there was a Judas.

The spirit of the world is for ever altering—impalpable; for ever eluding, in fresh forms, your attempts to seize it. In the days of Noah, the spirit of the world was *violence*. In Elijah's day it was *idolatry*. In the day of Christ it was *power* concentrated and condensed in the government of Rome. In ours, perhaps, it is the *love of money*. It enters in different proportions into different bosoms; it is found in a different form in contiguous towns; in the fashionable watering place, and in the commercial city: it is this thing at Athens, and another in Corinth. This is the spirit of the world—a thing in my heart and yours: to be struggled against, not so much in the case of others, as in the silent

battle to be done within our own souls. Pass we on now to consider—

II. The victory of faith.

Faith is a theological expression; we are apt to forget that it has any other than a theological import; yet it is the commonest principle of man's daily life, called in that region prudence, enterprise, or some such name. It is in effect the principle on which alone any human superiority can be gained. Faith, in religion, is the same principle as faith in worldly matters, differing only in its object: it rises through successive stages. When, in reliance upon your promise, your child gives up the half-hour's idleness of to-day for the holiday of to-morrow, he lives by faith; a future supersedes the present pleasure. When he abstains from over-indulgence of the appetite, in reliance upon your word that the result will be pain and sickness, sacrificing the present pleasure for fear of future punishment, he acts on faith: I do not say that this is a high exercise of faith; it is a very low one—but it *is* faith.

Once more:—The same motive of action may be carried on into manhood; in our own times two religious principles have been exemplified in the subjugation of a vice. The habit of intoxication has been broken by an appeal to the principle of combination, and the principle of belief. Men were taught to feel that they were not solitary strugglers against the vice; they were enrolled in a mighty army, identified in principles and interests. Here was the principle of the Church,—association for reciprocated strength; they were thus taught the inevitable result of the indulgence of the vice. The missionaries of temperance went through the country contrasting the wretchedness and the degradation and the filth of drunkenness with the domestic comfort, and the health, and the regular employment, of those who were masters of themselves. So far as men believed this, and gave up the tyranny of the present for the hope of the future—so far they lived by faith. Brethren, I do not say that this was a high triumph for the principle of faith;

it was, in fact, little more than selfishness; it was a high future balanced against a low present; only the preference of a future and higher physical enjoyment to a mean and lower one. Yet still to be ruled by this influence raises a man in the scale of being: it is a low virtue, prudence, a form of selfishness; yet prudence is a virtue. The merchant, who forecasts, saves, denies himself systematically, through years, to amass a fortune, is not a very lofty being, yet he is higher, as a man, than he who is sunk in mere bodily gratifications. You would not say that the intemperate man—who has become temperate in order, merely, to gain by that temperance honour and happiness—is a great man, but you would say he was a higher and a better man than he who is enslaved by his passions, or than the gambler who improvidently stakes all upon a moment's throw. The worldly mother who plans for the advancement of a family, and sacrifices solid enjoyments for a splendid alliance, is only *worldly* wise, yet in that manœuvring and worldly prudence there is the exercise of a self-control which raises her above the mere giddy pleasure-hunter of the hour; for want of self-control is the weakness of our nature—to restrain, to wait, to control present feeling with a large foresight, is human strength.

Once more, instead of a faith like that of the child, which over-leaps a few hours, or that of the worldly man, which over-passes years, there may be a faith which transcends the whole span of life, and, instead of looking for temporal enjoyments, looks for rewards in a future beyond the grave, instead of a future limited to time.

This is again a step. The child has sacrificed a day; the man has sacrificed a little more. Faith has now reached a stage which deserves to be called religious; not that this, however, is very grand; it does but prefer a happiness hereafter to a happiness enjoyed here—an eternal well-being instead of a temporal well-being; it is but prudence on a grand scale—another form of selfishness—an anticipation of infinite rewards instead of finite, and not the more noble because of the infinitude of the gain: and yet this is what is

often taught as religion in books and sermons. We are told that sin is wrong, because it will make us miserable hereafter. Guilt is represented as the short-sightedness which barters for a home on earth—a home in heaven.

In the text-book of ethics studied in one of our universities, virtue is defined as that which is done at the command of God for the sake of an eternal reward. So, then, religion is nothing more than a calculation of infinite and finite quantities; vice is nothing more than a grand imprudence; and heaven is nothing more than selfishness rewarded with eternal well-being!

Yet this, you will observe, is a necessary step in the development of faith. Faith is the conviction that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him; and there is a moment in human progress when the anticipated rewards and punishments must be of a Mahometan character—the happiness of the senses. It was thus that the Jews were disciplined; out of a coarse, rude, infantine state, they were educated by rewards and punishments to abstain from present sinful gratification: at first, the promise of the life which now is, afterwards the promise of that which is to come; but even then the rewards and punishments of a future state were spoken of, by inspiration itself, as of an arbitrary character; and some of the best of the Israelites, in looking to the recompense of reward, seemed to have anticipated coarsely, recompense in exchange for duties performed.

The last step is that which alone deserves to be called Christian Faith—"Who is he that overcometh but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?" The difference between the faith of the Christian and that of the man of the world, or the mere ordinary religionist, is not a difference in mental operation, but in the object of the faith—to believe that Jesus is the Christ is the peculiarity of Christian faith.

The anticipated heaven of the Christian differs from the anticipated heaven of any other man, not in the distinctness with which its imagery is perceived, but in the kind of

objects which are hoped for. The apostle has told us the character of heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"—which glorious words are sometimes strangely misinterpreted, as if the apostle merely meant rhetorically to exalt the conception of the heavenly world, as of something beyond all power to imagine or to paint. The apostle meant something infinitely deeper: the heaven of God is not only that which "eye hath not seen," but that which eye can *never* see; its glories are not of that kind at all which can ever stream in forms of beauty on the eye, or pour in melody upon the enraptured ear—not such joys as genius in its most gifted hour (here called "the heart of man") can invent or imagine: it is something which these sensuous organs of ours never can appreciate—bliss of another kind altogether, revealed to the spirit of man by the Spirit of God—joys such as spirit alone can receive. Do you ask what these are? "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." That is heaven, and therefore the Apostle tells us that he alone who "believeth that Jesus is the Christ," and only he, feels that. What is it to believe that Jesus is the Christ?—that He is the Anointed One, that His life is the anointed life, the only blessed life, the blessed life divine for thirty years?—Yes, but if so, the blessed life still, continued throughout all eternity; unless you believe that, you do not believe that Jesus is the Christ.

What is the blessedness that you expect?—to have the joys of earth with the addition of the element of eternity? Men think that heaven is to be a compensation for earthly loss: the saints are earthly-wretched here, the children of this world are earthly-happy; but *that*, they think, shall be all reversed—Lazarus, beyond the grave, shall have the purple and the fine linen, and the splendour, and the houses, and the lands which Dives had on earth: the one had them for time, the other shall have them for eternity.

That is the heaven that men expect—this earth sacrificed *now*, in order that it may be re-granted for *ever*.

Nor will this expectation be reversed except by a reversal of the nature. None can anticipate such a heaven as God has revealed, except they that are born of the Spirit; therefore, to believe that Jesus is the Christ, a man must be born of God. You will observe that no other victory overcomes the world: for this is what St. John means by saying, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?" For then it comes to pass that a man begins to feel, that to do wrong is hell; and that to love God, to be like God, to have the mind of Christ, is the only heaven. Until this victory is gained, the world retains its stronghold in the heart.

Do you think that the temperate man has overcome the world, who, instead of the short-lived rapture of intoxication, chooses regular employment, health, and prosperity? Is it not the world in another form, which has his homage? Or do you suppose that the so-called religious man is really the world's conqueror by being content to give up seventy years of enjoyment in order to win innumerable ages of the very same species of enjoyment? Has he not only made earth a hell, in order that earthly things may be his heaven for ever?

Thus the victory of faith proceeds from stage to stage: the first victory is, when the present is conquered by the future; the last, when the visible and sensual is despised in comparison of the invisible and eternal. Then earth has lost its power for ever; for if all that it has to give be lost eternally, the gain of faith is still infinite.

REST

MATTHEW xi. 28, 29.—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

No one, perhaps, ever read these words of Christ without being struck with their singular adaptation to the necessities of our nature. We have read them again and again, and we have found them ever fresh, beautiful, and new. No man could ever read them without being conscious that they realized the very deepest and inmost want of his being. We feel it is a convincing proof of His Divine mission that He has thus struck the key-note of our nature, in offering us Rest.

Ancient systems were busy in the pursuit after happiness. Our modern systems of philosophy, science, ay, even of theology, occupy themselves with the same thought; telling us alike that "happiness is our being's end and aim." But it is not so that the Redeemer teaches. His doctrine is in words such as these: "In the world ye shall have"—not happiness, but—"tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "In Me ye shall have peace." Not happiness—the outward well-being so called in the world—but the inward rest which cometh from above. And He alone who made this promise had a right to say, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find Rest unto your souls." He had that Rest in Himself, and therefore could impart it; but it is often offered by men who have not the peace themselves. There are some, high professors of religion too, who have never known this real rest, and who at fifty, sixty, seventy years of age, are as much slaves of the world as when they began, desiring still the honours, the riches, or the pleasures it has to give, and utterly neglecting the Life which is to come.

When we turn to the history of Christ we find this repose

characterizing His whole existence. For example, first, in the marriage feast at Cana, in Galilee. He looked not upon that festivity with cynical asperity; He frowned not upon the innocent joys of life: He made the wine to give enjoyment, and yet singularly contrasted was His Human and His Divine joy. His mother came to Him full of consternation, and said, "They have no wine;" and the Redeemer, with calm self-possession, replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." He felt not the deficiency which He supplied.

We pass from the marriage feast to the scene of grief at Bethany, and still there we find that singular repose. Those words which we have seen to possess an almost magical charm in soothing the grief of mourners congregated round the coffin of the dead—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die,"—speak they not of repose? But in the requirements of these great matters many men are not found wanting; it is when we come to the domesticities of their existence that we see fretting anxiety comes upon their soul. Therefore it is that we gladly turn to that home at Bethany where He had gone for quiet rest. Let us hear His words on the subject of every-day cares: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful."

We pass on from that, to the state in which a man is tried the most: and if ever we can pardon words of restlessness and petulance, it is when friends are unfaithful. Yet even here there is perfect calmness. Looking steadfastly into the future, He says, "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

Once more, we turn to the Redeemer's prayers. They are characterized by a calmness singularly contrasted with the vehemence which we sometimes see endeavouring to lash itself into a greater fervour of devotion. The model

prayer has no eloquence in it, it is calm, simple, full of repose.

We find this again in the 16th chapter of St. John. If a man feels himself unfitted and unable, if a man feels restless, we would recommend him to take up this chapter as his best cure. For at least one moment, as he read it, he would feel in his soul calmness and repose. It would seem almost as if he were listening to the grave and solemn words of a divine soliloquy. This was the Mind of Him who gave this gracious promise. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We repeat these words as a matter of course; but I ask, Has that repose been found?—has this peace come to us? for it is not of merit repeating them over and over again that we can enter into the deep Rest of Christ.

Our subject this day will be to consider in the first place, the false systems of rest which the world holds out, and to contrast them with the true Rest of Christ. The first false system proposed is the expectation of repose in the grave. When the spirit has parted from the body after long-protracted sufferings, we often hear it said that the release was a happy one; that there is a repose in the grave; that there "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Nay, at times, perhaps, we feel ourselves haunting a hope that our own particular turmoil of existence had come to that point, when it should mingle with the vast ocean of eternity.

There is in all this a kind of spurious Pantheism, a sort of feeling that God is alike in every hour, that every man is to be blessed at last, that death is but a mere passage to a blessed sleep, that in the grave there is nothing but quiet, and that there is no misery beyond it. And yet one of the deepest thinkers of our nation suggests that there may be doubts even in the sleep of death. There is an Unrest even in the way in which we think of death. The consciousness, after the spirit has departed, is so strangely calm and weak that it produces no feeling of repose within us, and we transfer our feelings to that of the departed spirit.

and we fancy that body no longer convulsed with pain, those features so serene and full of peace, do but figure the rest which the spirit is enjoying; and yet, perhaps that soul, a few hours ago, was full of worldliness, full of pride, full of self-love. Think you that now that spirit is at rest—that it has entered into the Rest of Christ? The repose that belongs to the grave is not even a rest of the atoms composing our material form.

There is another fallacious system of rest which would place it in the absence of outward trial. This is the world's peace. The world's peace ever consists in plans for the removal of outward trials. There lies at the bottom of all false systems of peace, the fallacy that if we can but produce a perfect set of circumstances, then we shall have the perfect man; if we remove temptation, we shall have a holy being: and so the world's rest comes to this—merely happiness and outward enjoyment. Ay, my Christian brethren, we carry these anticipations beyond the grave, and we think the Heaven of God is but like the Mahometan paradise—a place in which the rain shall beat on us no longer, and the sun pour his burning rays upon us no more. Very often it is only a little less sensual, but quite as ignoble as that fabled by Mahomet.

The Redeemer throws all this aside at once as mere illusion. He teaches just the contrary. He says, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world proposes a rest by the removal of a burden. The Redeemer gives Rest by giving us the spirit and power to bear the burden. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Christ does not promise a rest of inaction, neither that the thorns shall be converted into roses, nor that the trials of life shall be removed.

To the man who takes this yoke up in Christ's spirit, labour becomes blessedness — rest of soul and rest of body.

It matters not in what circumstances men are, whether high or low, never shall the Rest of Christ be found in ease and self-gratification; never, throughout eternity, will there

be rest found in a life of freedom from duty:—the paradise of the sluggard, where there is no exertion; the heaven of the coward, where there is no difficulty to be opposed, is not the Rest of Christ. "Take my yoke upon you." Nay, more—if God could give us a heaven like that, it would be but misery; there can be no joy in indolent inaction. The curse on this world is labour; but to him who labours earnestly and truly, it turns to blessedness. It is a curse only to him who tries to escape from the work allotted to him, who endeavours to make a compromise with duty. To him who takes Christ's yoke, not in a spirit of selfish ease and acquiescence in evil, but in strife and stern battle with it, the Rest of Christ streams in upon his soul.

Many of us are drifting away from our moorings; we are quitting the old forms of thought, and faith, and life, and are seeking for something other than what satisfied the last generation: and this in a vain search for rest.

Many are the different systems of repose offered to us, and foremost is that proposed by the Church of Rome. Let us do her the justice, at all events, to allow that she follows the Redeemer in this—it is not happiness she promises, she promises rest. The great strength of Romanism lies in this, that she professes to answer and satisfy the deep want of human nature for rest. She speaks of an infallibility on which she would persuade men, weary of the strain of doubt, to rest. It is not to the tales of miracles, and of the personal interference of God Himself; but to the promise of an impossibility of error to those within her pale, that she owes her influence. And we say, better far to face doubt and perplexity manfully; to bear any yoke of Christ's than be content with the rest of a Church's infallibility. There is another error among many Dissenters; in a different form, we find the same promise held out. One says that if we will but rely on God's promise of election, our soul must find repose. Another system tells us that the penalty has fallen upon Christ, and that, if we believe, we shall no longer suffer. Narrowing their doctrines into one, as if all the want of the soul was to escape from punish-

ment, they place before us this doctrine, and say, believe that, and your soul shall find repose.

We have seen earnest men anxiously turning from view to view, and yet finding their souls as far from rest as ever. They remind us of the struggles of a man in fever, finding no rest, tossing from side to side, in vain seeking a cool spot on his pillow, and forgetting that the fever is within himself. And so it is with us; the unrest is within us: we foolishly expect to find that tranquillity in outward doctrine, which alone can come from the calmness of the soul.

We will not deny that there is a *kind* of rest to be found in doctrine for a time: for instance, when a man, whose only idea of evil is its penalty, has received the consoling doctrine that there is no suffering for him to bear: but the unrest comes again. Doubtless, the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they went to the baptism of John, found something of repose there; but think you that they went back to their daily life with the Rest of Christ? We expect some outward change will do that which nothing but the inward life can do—it is the life of Christ within the soul which alone can give repose. There have been men in the Church of Rome and in the ranks of Dissent who have indeed erred grievously, but yet have lived a life of godliness. There have been men in the true Church—as Judas, who was a member of the true Church—who yet, step by step, have formed in themselves the devil's nature: the Rest of Christ pertains not to any one outward communion.

Before we go farther, let us understand what is meant by this Rest; let us look to those symbols about us in the world of nature by which it is suggested. It is not the lake locked in ice that suggests repose, but the river moving on calmly and rapidly in silent majesty and strength. It is not the cattle lying in the sun, but the eagle cleaving the air with fixed pinions, that gives you the idea of repose combined with strength and motion. In creation, the Rest of God is exhibited as a sense of Power which nothing wearies. When chaos burst into harmony, so to speak, God had Rest.

There are two deep principles in Nature in apparent

contradiction—one, the aspiration after perfection; the other, the longing after repose. In the harmony of these lies the rest of the soul of man. There have been times when we have experienced this. Then the winds have been hushed, and the throb and the tumult of the passions have been blotted out of our bosoms. That was a moment when we were in harmony with all around, reconciled to ourselves and to our God; when we sympathized with all that was pure, all that was beautiful, all that was lovely.

This was not stagnation, it was fulness of life—life in its most expanded form, such as nature witnessed in her first hour. This is life in that form of benevolence which expands into the mind of Christ. And when this is working in the soul, it is marvellous how it distils into a man's words and countenance. Strange and magical is the power of that collect wherein we pray to God, "Who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, to grant unto His people that they may love the thing which He commands, and desire that which He promises; that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found." There is a wondrous melody in that rhythm; the words are the echoes of the thought. The mind of the man who wrote them was in repose—all is ringing of rest. We do not wonder when Moses came down from the mount on which he had been bowing in adoration before the harmony of God, that his face was shining with a brightness too dazzling to look upon.

Our blessed Redeemer refers this Rest to meekness and lowliness. There are three causes in men producing unrest:—1. Suspicion of God. 2. Inward discord. 3. Dissatisfaction with outward circumstances. For all these Meekness is the cure. For the difficulty of understanding this world, the secret is in meekness. There is no mystery in God's dealings to the meek man, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant;" there is no dread of God's judgments when our souls are meek.

The second cause of unrest is inward discord. We are going on in our selfishness. We stand, as Balaam stood, against the angel of the Lord, pressing on whilst the angel of Love stands against us. Just as the dove struggling against the storm, feeble and tired, is almost spent, until gradually, as if by inspiration, it has descended to the lower atmosphere, and so avoided the buffeting of the tempests above, and is then borne on by the wind of heaven in entire repose: like that is the rest of the soul. While we are unreconciled, the Love of God stands against us, and, by His Will, as long as man refuses to take up that yoke of His, he is full of discord; he is like the dove struggling with the elements aloft, as yet unconscious of the calm there is below. And you must make no compromise in taking up the burden of the Lord.

Lastly, unrest comes from dissatisfaction with outward circumstances. Part, perhaps the greater part of our misery here, comes from over-estimation of ourselves. We are slaves to vanity and pride. We think we are not in the right station; our genius has been misunderstood; we have been slighted, we have been passed by, we have not been rewarded as we ought to have been. So long as we have this false opinion of ourselves, it is impossible for us to realize true rest. Sinners in a world of love, encircling you round on every side; blessings infinite upon infinite, and that again multiplied by infinity: God loves you: God fills you with enjoyment! Unjustly, unfairly treated in this world of love! Once let a man know for himself what God is, and then in that he will find peace. It will be the dawn of an everlasting day of calmness and serenity. I speak to some who have felt the darkness, the clouds, and the dreariness of life, whose affections have been blighted, who feel a discord and confusion in their being. To some to whom the world, lovely though it be, is such that they are obliged to say, "I see, I do not feel, how beautiful it is."

Brother men, there is Rest in Christ, because He is Love; because His are the everlasting Verities of Humanity. God does not cease to be the God of Love because men are

low, sad, and desponding. In the performance of duty, in meekness, in trust in God, is our rest—our only rest. It is not in understanding a set of doctrines; not in an outward comprehension of the "scheme of salvation," that rest and peace are to be found, but in taking up in all lowliness and meekness, the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

UNITY AND PEACE

COLOSSIANS iii. 15.—"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."

THERE is something in these words that might surprise us. It might surprise us to find that peace is urged on us as a duty. There can be no duty except where there is a matter of obedience; and it might seem to us that peace is a something over which we have no power. It is a privilege to have peace, but it would appear as if there were no control within the mind of a man able to ensure that peace for itself. "Yet," says the apostle, "let the peace of God rule in your hearts." It would seem to us as if peace were as far beyond our own control as happiness. Unquestionably, we are not masters on our own responsibility of our own happiness. Happiness is the gratification of every innocent desire; but it is not given to us to ensure the gratification of every desire; therefore, happiness is not a duty, and it is nowhere written in the Scripture, "You must be happy." But we find it written by the Apostle Paul, "Be ye thankful,"

implying, therefore, that it is a duty. The apostle says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts;" from which we infer that peace is attainable, and within the reach of our own wills; that if there be not repose there is blame; if there be not peace, but discord in the heart, there is something wrong. This is the more surprising when we remember the circumstances under which these words were written. They were written from Rome, where the apostle lay in prison, daily and hourly expecting a violent death. They were written in days of persecution, when false doctrines were rife, and religious animosities fierce; they were written in an epistle abounding with the most earnest and eager controversy, whereby it is therefore implied, that according to the conception of the Apostle Paul, it is possible for a Christian to live at the very point of death, and in the very midst of danger—that it is possible for him to be breathing the atmosphere of religious controversy—it is possible for him to be surrounded by bitterness, and even take up the pen of controversy himself—and yet his soul shall not lose its own deep peace, nor the power of the infinite repose and rest of God. Joined with the apostle's command to be at peace, we find another doctrine, the doctrine of the unity of the Church of Christ. "To the which ye are called in one body," in order that ye may be at peace; in other words, the unity of the Church of Christ is the basis on which, and on which alone, can be built the possibility of the inward peace of individuals.

And thus, my Christian brethren, our subject divides itself into these two simple branches: in the first place, the unity of the Church of Christ; in the second place, the inward peace of the members of that Church.

The first subject, then, which we have to consider, is the Unity of the Church of Christ.

And the first thing we have to do is both clearly to define and understand the meaning of that word "unity." I distinguish the unity of comprehensiveness from the

unity of mere singularity. The word one, as oneness, is an ambiguous word. There is a oneness belonging to the army as well as to every soldier in the army. The army is one, and that is the oneness of unity; the soldier is one, but that is the oneness of the unit. There is a difference between the oneness of a body and the oneness of a member of that body. The body is many, and a unity of manifold comprehensiveness. An arm or a member of a body is one, but that is the unity of singularity. Without that unity, my Christian brethren, peace must be impossible. There can be no peace in the one single soldier of an army. You do not speak of the harmony of one member of a body. There is peace in an army, or in a kingdom joined with other kingdoms; there is harmony in a member united with other members. There is no peace in a unit; there is no possibility of the harmony of that which is but one in itself. In order to have peace you must have a higher unity, and therein consists the unity of God's own Being. The unity of God is the basis of the peace of God —meaning by the unity of God the comprehensive manifoldness of God, and not merely the singularity in the number of God's Being. When the Unitarian speaks of God as one, he means simply singularity of number. We mean that He is of manifold comprehensiveness—that there is unity between the various powers. Amongst the personalities or powers of His Being there is no discord, but perfect harmony, entire union; and that, brethren, is repose, the blessedness of infinite rest, that belongs to the unity of God—"I and my Father are one."

The second thing which we observe respecting this unity, is that it subsists between things not similar or alike, but things dissimilar or unlike. There is no unity in the separate atoms of a sand-pit: they are things similar; there is an aggregate or collection of them. Even if they be hardened in a mass they are not one, they do not form a unity: they are simply a mass. There is no unity in a flock of sheep: it is simply a repetition of a number of things similar to each other. If you strike off from a

thousand five hundred, or if you strike off nine hundred, there is nothing lost of unity, because there never was unity. A flock of one thousand or a flock of five is just as much a flock as any other number.

On the other hand, let us turn to the unity of peace which the apostle speaks of, and we find it is something different; it is made up of dissimilar members, without which dissimilarity there could be no unity. Each is imperfect in itself, each supplying what it has in itself to the deficiencies and wants of the other members. So, if you strike off from this body any one member, if you cut off an arm, or tear out an eye, instantly the unity is destroyed; you have no longer an entire and perfect body, there is nothing but a remnant of the whole, a part, a portion; no unity whatever. And this will help us to understand the unity of the Church of Christ. If the ages and the centuries of the Church of Christ, if the different Churches whereof it was composed, if the different members of each Church, were similar—one in this, that they all held the same views, all spoke the same words, all viewed truth from the same side, they would have no unity; but would simply be an aggregate of atoms, the sand-pit over again—units, multiplied it may be to infinity, but you would have no real unity, and, therefore, no peace. No unity; for wherein consists the unity of the Church of Christ? The unity of ages, brethren, consists it in this—that every age is merely the repetition of another age, and that which is held in one is held in another? Precisely in the same way, that is *not* the unity of the ages of the Christian Church.

Every century and every age has held a different truth, has put forth different fragments of the truth. In early ages, for example, by martyrdom was proclaimed the eternal sanctity of truth, rather than give up which a man must lose his life. . . . In our own age it is quite plain those are not the themes which engage us, or the truths which we put in force now. This age, by its revolutions, its socialisms, proclaims another truth—the brotherhood of

the Church of Christ; so that the unity of ages subsists on the same principle as that of the unity of the human body; that as every separate ray—the violet, the blue, and the orange—make up the white ray, so these manifold fragments of truth blended together make up the one entire and perfect white ray of Truth. And with regard to individuals, taking the case of the Reformation, it was given to one Church to proclaim that salvation is a thing received, and not local; to another to proclaim justification by faith; to another the sovereignity of God; to another the supremacy of the Scriptures; to another the right of private judgment, the duty of the individual conscience. Unite these all, and then you have the Reformation one—one in spite of manifoldness; those very varieties by which they have approached this proving them to be one. Disjoint them, and then you have some miserable sect—Calvinism, or Unitarianism; the unity has dispersed. And so, again, with the unity of the Churches. Whereby would we produce unity? Would we force on other Churches our Anglicanism? Would we have our thirty-nine articles, our creeds, our prayers, our rules and regulations, accepted by every Church throughout the world? If that were unity, then in consistency you are bound to demand that in God's world there shall be but one colour instead of the manifold harmony and accordance of which this universe is full; that there should be but one chaunted note which we conceived most beautiful. This is not the unity of the Church of God. The various Churches advance different doctrines and truths. The Church of Germany something different from those of the Church of England. The Church of Rome, even in its idolatry, proclaims truths which we would be glad to seize. By the worship of the Virgin, the purity of women; by the rigour of ecclesiastical ordinances, the sanctity and permanence of eternal order; by the very priesthood itself, the necessity of the guidance of man by man. Nay, even the dissenting bodies themselves—mere atoms of aggregates as they are—stand forward and proclaim at least this truth, the

separateness of the individual conscience, the right of independence.

Peace subsists not between things exactly alike. We do not speak of peace in a single country. We say peace subsists between different countries where war *might* be. There can be no *peace* between two men who agree in everything; peace subsists between those who differ. There is no peace between Baptist and Baptist; so far as they are Baptists, there is perfect accordance and agreement. There may be peace between you and the Romanist, the Jew, or the Dissenter, because there are angles of sharpness which might come into collision if they were not subdued and softened by the power of love. It was given to the Apostle Paul to discern that this was the ground of unity. In the Church of Christ he saw men with different views, and he said, so far from that variety destroying unity, it was the only ground of unity. There are many doctrines, all of them different, but let those varieties be blended together—in other words, let there be the peace of love, and then you will have unity.

Once more, this unity, whereof the apostle speaks, consists in submission to one single influence or spirit. Wherein consists the unity of the body? Consists it not in this,—that there is one life uniting, making all the separate members one? Take away the life, and the members fall to pieces; they are no longer one; decomposition begins, and every element separates, no longer having any principle of cohesion or union with the rest. There is not one of us who, at some time or other, has not been struck with the power there is in a single living influence. Have we never, for instance, felt the power wherewith the orator unites and holds together a thousand men as if they were but one; with flashing eyes and throbbing hearts, all attentive to his words, and by the difference of their attitudes, by the variety of the expressions of their countenances testifying to the unity of that single living feeling with which he had inspired them? Whether it be indignation, whether it be compassion, or whether it be enthusiasm, that one living

influence made the thousand for the time, one. Have we not heard how, even in this century in which we live, the various and conflicting feelings of the people of this country were concentrated into one, when the threat of foreign invasion had fused down and broken the edges of conflict and variance, and from shore to shore was heard one cry of terrible defiance, and the different classes and orders of this manifold and mighty England were as one? Have we not heard how the mighty winds hold together, as if one, the various atoms of the desert, so that they rush like a living thing, across the wilderness? And this, brethren, is the unity of the Church of Christ, the subjection to the one uniting spirit of its God.

It will be said, in reply to this, "Why, this is mere enthusiasm. It may be very beautiful in theory, but it is impossible in practice. It is mere enthusiasm to believe, that while all these varieties of conflicting opinion remain, we can have unity; it is mere enthusiasm to think that so long as men's minds reckon on a thing like unity, there can be a thing like oneness." And our reply is, Give us the Spirit of God, and we shall be one. You cannot produce a unity by all the rigour of your ecclesiastical discipline. You cannot produce a unity by consenting in some form of expression such as this, "Let us agree to differ." You cannot produce a unity by Parliamentary regulations or enactments, bidding back the waves of what is called aggression. Give us the living Spirit of God, and we shall be one. Once on this earth was exhibited, as it were, a specimen of perfect anticipation of such an unity, when the "rushing mighty wind" of Pentecost came down in the tongues of fire and sat on every man; when the Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, the "Cretes and Arabians," the Jew and the Gentile, each speaking one language, yet blended and fused into one unity by enthusiastic love, heard one another speak, as it were, in one language, the manifold works of God; when the spirit of giving was substituted for the spirit of mere rivalry and competition, and no

man said the things he had were his own, but all shared in common. Let that spirit come again, as come it will, and come it must; and then, beneath the influences of a mightier love, we shall have a nobler and a more real unity.

We pass on now, in the second place, to consider the *individual peace* resulting from this unity. As we have endeavoured to explain what is meant by unity, so now, let us endeavour to understand what is meant by peace. Peace then, is the opposite of passion, and of labour, toil, and effort. Peace is that state in which there are no desires madly demanding an impossible gratification; that state in which there is no misery, no remorse, no sting. And there are but three things which can break that peace. The first is discord between the mind of man and the lot which he is called on to inherit; the second is discord between the affections and powers of the soul; and the third is doubt of the rectitude, and justice, and love, wherewith this world is ordered. But where these things exist not, where a man is contented with his lot, where the flesh is subdued to the spirit, and where he believes and feels with all his heart that all is right, there is peace, and to this, says the apostle, "ye are called," and that is the grand, peculiar call of Christianity,—the call, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This was the dying bequest of Christ: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you:" and therein lies one of the greatest truths of the blessed and eternal character of Christianity, that it applies to, and satisfies, the very deepest want and craving of our nature. The deepest want of man is not a desire for happiness, but a craving for peace; not a wish for the gratification of every desire, but a craving for the repose of acquiescence in the will of God; and it is this which Christianity promises. Christianity does not promise happiness, but it does promise peace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation,"

saith our Master, "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Now, let us look more closely into this peace.

The first thing we see respecting it is, that it is called God's peace. God is rest: the infinite nature of God is infinite repose. The "*I am*" of God is contrasted with the *I am become* of all other things. Everything else is in a state of *becoming*, God is in a state of *being*. The acorn has become the plant, and the plant has become the oak. The child has become the man, and the man has become good, or wise, or whatever else it may be. God ever *is;* and I pray you once more to observe, that this peace of God, this eternal rest in the Almighty Being, arises out of His unity. Not because He is a unit, but because He is a unity. There is no discord between the powers and attributes of the mind of God; there is no discord between His justice and His love; there is no discord demanding some miserable expedient to unite them together, such as some theologians imagined when they described the sacrifice and atonement of our Redeemer by saying, it is the clever expedient whereby God reconciles His justice with His love. God's justice and love are one. Infinite justice must be infinite love. Justice is but another sign of love. The infinite rest of the "*I am*" of God arises out of the harmony of His attributes.

The next thing we observe respecting this divine peace which has come down to man on earth is, that it is a *living peace*. Brethren, let us distinguish. There are several things called peace which are by no means divine or Godlike peace. There is peace, for example, in the man who lives for and enjoys self, with no nobler aspiration goading him on to make him feel the rest of God; that is peace, but that is merely the peace of toil. There is rest on the surface of the caverned lake, which no wind can stir; but that is the peace of stagnation. There is peace amongst the stones which have fallen and rolled down the mountain's side, and lie there quietly at rest; but that is the peace of inanity. There is peace in the hearts of enemies who lie together,

side by side, in the same trench of the battle-field, the animosities of their souls silenced at length, and their hands no longer clenched in deadly enmity against each other; but that is the peace of death. If our peace be but the peace of the sensualist satisfying pleasure, if it be but the peace of mental torpor and inaction, the peace of apathy, or the peace of the soul dead in trespasses and sins, we may whisper to ourselves, "Peace, peace," but there will be no peace; *there* is not the peace of unity, nor the peace of God, for the peace of God is the living peace of love.

The next thing we observe respecting this peace is, that it is the manifestation of power—it is the peace which comes from an inward power: "Let the peace of God," says the apostle, "rule within your hearts." For it is a power, the manifestation of strength. There is no peace except there is the possibility of the opposite of peace although now restrained and controlled. You do not speak of the peace of a grain of sand, because it cannot be otherwise than merely insignificant, and at rest. You do not speak of the peace of a mere pond; you speak of the peace of the sea, because there is the opposite of peace implied, there is power and strength. And this, brethren, is the real character of the peace in the mind and soul of man. Oh! we make a great mistake when we say there is strength in passion, in the exhibition of emotion. Passion, and emotion, and all those outward manifestations, prove, not strength, but weakness. If the passions of a man are strong, it proves the man himself is weak, if he cannot restrain or control his passions. The real strength and majesty of the soul of man is calmness, the manifestation of strength; "the peace of God" ruling; the word of Christ saying to the inward storms "Peace!" and there is "a great calm."

Lastly, the peace of which the apostle speaks is the peace that is received—the peace of reception. You will observe, throughout this passage the apostle speaks of a something received, and not done: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." It is throughout receptive, but by no means inactive. And according to this, there are two kinds of

peace; the peace of obedience—"Let the peace of God rule" you—and there is the peace of gratefulness—"Be ye thankful." Very great, brethren, is the peace of obedience: when a man has his lot fixed, and his mind made up, and his destiny before him, and quietly acquiesces in that, his spirit is at rest. Great and deep is the peace of the soldier to whom has been assigned an untenable position, with the command, "Keep that, or die," and he obediently remains to die.

Great was the peace of Elisha—very, very calm are those words by which he expressed his acquiescence in the divine will. "Knowest thou," said the troubled, excited, and restless men around him—"Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" He answered, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." Then there is the other peace, it is the peace of gratefulness: "Be ye thankful." It is that peace which the Israelites had when these words were spoken to them on the shores of the Red Sea, while the bodies of their enemies floated past them, destroyed, but not by them: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

And here, brethren, is another mistake of ours: we look on salvation as a thing to be done, and not received. In God's salvation we can do but little, but there is a great deal to be received. We are here, not merely to act, but to be acted upon. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts;" there is a peace that will enter there, if you do not thwart it; there is a Spirit that will take possession of your soul, provided that you do not quench it. In this world we are recipients, not creators. In obedience and in gratefulness, and the infinite peace of God in the soul of man, is alone deep rest and repose.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHARITY

1 PETER iv. 8.—"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

THE grace of charity is exalted as the highest attainment of the Christian life by St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John. These three men were very different from each other. Each was the type of a distinct order of character. And it is a proof that the Gospel is from God, and that the sacred writings are inspired from a single Divine source, that personal peculiarities are not placed foremost in them, but the foremost place is given by each to a grace which certainly was not the characteristic quality of all the three.

It is said in these modern days that Christianity was a system elaborated by human intellect. Men, they say, philosophized, and thought it out. Christianity, it is maintained, like ethics, is the product of human reason. Now had this been true, we should have found the great teachers of Christianity each exalting that particular quality which was most remarkable in his own temperament. Just as the English honour truthfulness, and the French brilliancy, and the Hindoos subtlety, and the Italians finesse—and naturally, because these are predominant in themselves—we should have found the Apostles insisting most strongly on those graces which grew most naturally in the soil of their own hearts.

Indeed in a degree it is so. St. John's character was tender, emotional, and contemplative. Accordingly, his writings exhibit the *feeling* of religion, and the predominance of the inner life over the outer.

St. Paul was a man of keen intellect, and of soaring and aspiring thought which would endure no shackles on its freedom. And his writings are full of the two subjects we might have expected from this temperament. He speaks a great deal of intellectual gifts; very much of Christian liberty.

St. Peter was remarkable for personal courage. A soldier

by nature: frank, free, generous, irascible. In his writings accordingly, we find a great deal said about martyrdom.

But each of these men, so different from each other, exalts love above his own peculiar quality. It is very remarkable. Not merely does each call charity the highest, but each names it in immediate connection with his own characteristic virtue, and declares it to be more divine.

St. John, of course, calls love the heavenliest. That we expect from St. John's character. "God is Love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." "No man hath seen God at any time: if we love one another God dwelleth in us."

But St. Paul expressly names it in contrast with the two feelings for which he was personally most remarkable, and, noble as they are, prefers it before them. First, in contrast with intellectual gifts. Thus (1 Cor. xii.), "Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way: though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, it is nothing." Gifts are nothing in comparison of charity. Again, "We know that we all have knowledge: knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up." Knowledge is nothing in comparison.

Next, in comparison of that liberty which was so dear to him. Christian liberty permitted the converts the use of meats, and the disregard of days from which the strict law of Judaism had debarred them. Well; but there were cases in which the exercise of that liberty might hurt the scruples of some weak Christian brother, or lead him to imitate the example against his conscience. "If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not *charitably*." Liberty said, You have a right to indulge; but Charity said, Refrain.

So that, according to St. Paul, there is one thing, and one only, to which Christian liberty must be sacrificed. That one is Christian love.

Now let us see how St. Peter does honour to the same grace, at the expense of that which we should have expected him to reckon the essential grace of manhood. Just before the text, we find the command, "Be sober, and watch unto

prayer." This is a sentence out of St. Peter's very heart. For in it we have prayer represented as the night-watch of a warrior, armed, who must not sleep his watch away. "Be sober, and watch"—the language of the soldier and the sentinel; words which remind you of him who drew his sword to defend his Master, and who in penitence remembered his own disastrous sleep when he was surprised as a sentry at his post. But immediately after this,—"And, *above all things*, have fervent charity amongst yourselves." Sobriety, self-rule, manhood, courage, yes; but the life of them all, says St. Peter, the very crown of manhood, without which sobriety is but prudent selfishness, and courage is but brute instinct—is Love.

Now I take that unanimity as a proof that the Gospel comes from one Living Source. How came St. Peter and St. John, so different from each other, and St. Paul, who had had almost no communion with either of them, to agree, and agree so enthusiastically, in this doctrine—Love is over all and above all; above intellect, freedom, courage—unless there had streamed into the mind and heart of each one of them Light from One Source, even from Him the deepest principle of Whose Being, and the law of Whose life and death, were love?

We are to try, to-day, to understand this sentence of St. Peter. It tells us two things—

I. What charity is.
II. What charity does.

I. What charity is.

It is not easy to find one word in any language which rightly and adequately represents what Christ and His Apostles meant by charity. All words are saturated with some imperfect meaning. Charity has become identified with almsgiving. Love is appropriated to one particular form of human affection, and that one with which self and passion mix inevitably. Philanthropy is a word too cold and negative.

Let us define Christian charity in two sentences:—1. The desire to give. 2. The desire to bless.

1. The desire to give. Let each man go deep into his own heart. Let him ask what that mysterious longing means which we call love, whether to man or God, when he has stripped from it all that is outside and accidental; when he has taken from it all that is mixed with it and perverts it. Not in his worst moments—but in his best, what did that yearning mean? I say it meant the desire to give. Not to get something, but to give something. And the mightier, the more irrepressible this yearning was, the more truly was his love love. To give—whether alms in the shape of money, bread, or a cup of cold water, or else self. But be sure, sacrifice, in some shape or other, is the impulse of love, and its restlessness is only satisfied and only gets relief in giving. For this, in truth, is God's own love, the will and the power to give. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Therefore God is the only blessed One, because He alone gives and never receives. The universe, teeming with life, is but God's Love expressing itself. He creates life by the giving of Himself. He has redeemed the world by the giving of His Son. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The death of Christ was sacrifice. The Life of God is one perpetual sacrifice, or giving of Himself and shedding forth of His Spirit. Else it would not be love.

And so, when the poor sinful woman gave her costly ointment with a large profuseness, Christ saw in it an evidence of love. "She loved much." For love gives.

2. The desire to bless.

All love is this in a degree. Even weak and spurious love desires happiness of some kind for the creature that it loves. Almsgiving is often nothing more than indolence. We give to the beggar in the street to save ourselves the trouble of finding out fitter objects. Still, indolent as it is, it is an indolent desire to prevent pain.

What we call philanthropy is often calm and cool—too calm and cool to waste upon it the name of charity. But it

is a calm and cool desire that human happiness were possible. It is in its weak way a desire to bless. Now, the love whereof the Bible speaks, and of which we have but one perfect personification—viz., in the Life of Christ, is the desire for the best and true blessedness of the being loved. It wishes the well-being of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit; but chiefly spirit.

Therefore, He fed the poor with bread. Therefore, He took His disciples into the wilderness to rest when they were weary. Therefore "He gave Himself for us, that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness." For the Kingdom of God is not bread only and repose, which constitute physical happiness, but goodness, too; for that is blessedness.

And the highest love is, therefore, the desire to make men good and godlike; it may wish, as a subordinate attainment, to turn this earth into a paradise of comfort by mechanical inventions; but far above that, to transform it into a Kingdom of God, the domain of love, where men cease to quarrel and to envy, and to slander and to retaliate. "This, also, we wish," said St. Paul, "even your perfection."

Concerning this charity we remark two points: 1. It is characterized as fervent. 2. It is capable of being cultivated.

1. "Fervent."

Literally, intense, unremitting, unwearied. Now, there is a feeble sentiment which wishes well to all so long as it is not tempted to wish them ill, which does well to those who do well to them. But this being merely sentiment, will not last. Ruffle it, and it becomes vindictive. In contrast with that St. Peter calls Christ's spirit, which loves those who hate it, "fervent" charity, which does not tire, and cannot be worn out; which loves its enemies, and does good to them that hate it. For Christian love is not the dream of a philosopher, sitting in his study, and benevolently wishing the world were better than it is, congratulating himself, perhaps, all the time on the superiority shown by himself over other less amiable natures. Injure one of these

beaming sons of good humour, and he bears malice: deep, unrelenting, refusing to forgive. But give us the man who, instead of retiring to some small, select society, or rather association, where his own opinions shall be reflected, can mix with men where his sympathies are unmet, and his tastes are jarred, and his views traversed, at every turn, and still can be just, and gentle, and forbearing.

Give us the man who can be insulted and not retaliate; meet rudeness and still be courteous; the man who, like the Apostle Paul, buffeted and disliked, can yet be generous, and make allowances, and say, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." That is "fervent charity."

2. Again, it is capable of being cultivated.

We assume that, simply because it is enjoined. When an Apostle says, "*Have* fervent charity among yourselves," it is plain that it would be a cruel mockery to command men to attain it if they could do nothing towards the attainment. It would be the same insult as saying to the deformed, "be beautiful." For it is wanton cruelty to command where obedience is impossible.

How shall we cultivate this charity?

Now, I observe first, love cannot be produced by a direct action of the soul upon itself. You cannot love by a resolve to love. That is as impossible as it is to move a boat by pressing it from within. The force with which you press on is exactly equal to that with which you press back. The reaction is exactly equal to the action. You force backwards exactly as much as you force on. There are religious persons who, when they feel their affections cooled, strive to warm them by self-reproach, or by unnatural effort, or by the excitement of what they call revivals—trying to work themselves into a state of warm affection. There are others who hope to make feeble love strong by using strong words. Now, for all this they pay a price. Effort of heart is followed by collapse. Excitement is followed by exhaustion. They will find that they have cooled exactly in that proportion in which they warmed, and at least as fast.

It is as impossible for a man to work himself into a state of genuine fervent love as it is for a man to inspire himself. Inspiration is a breath and a life coming from without. Love is a feeling roused not from ourselves, but from something outside ourselves.

There are, however, two methods by which we may cultivate this charity.

1. By doing acts which love demands. It is God's merciful law that feelings are increased by acts done on principle. If a man has not the feeling in its warmth, let him not wait till the feeling comes. Let him act with such feeling as he has; with a cold heart if he has not got a warm one; it will grow warmer while he acts. You may love a man merely because you have done him benefits, and so become interested in him, till interest passes into anxiety, and anxiety into affection. You may acquire courtesy of feeling at last, by cultivating courteous manner. The dignified politeness of the last century forced man into a kind of unselfishness in small things, which the abrupter manners of to-day will never teach. And say what men will of rude sincerity, those old men of urbane manners were kinder at heart with real good will, than we are with that rude bluffness which counts it a loss of independence to be courteous to any one. Gentleness of manner had some influence on gentleness of heart. So, in the same way, in things spiritual. If our hearts are cool, and we find it hard to love God and be affectionate to men, we must begin with duty. Duty is not Christian liberty, but it is the first step towards liberty. We are free only when we love what we are to do, and those to whom we do it. Let a man begin in earnest with—I ought—he will end, by God's grace, if he persevere, with the free blessedness of—I will. Let him force himself to abound in small offices of kindliness, attention, affectionateness, and all those for God's sake. By-and-by, he will feel them become the habit of his soul. By-and-by, walking in the conscientiousness of refusing to retaliate when he feels tempted, he will cease to wish it: doing good and heaping kindness on those who injure him, he will learn

to love them. For he has spent a treasure there: "And where the treasure is there will the heart be also."

2. The second way of cultivating Christian love is by contemplating the love of God. You cannot move the boat from within; but you may obtain a purchase from without. You cannot create love in the soul by force from within itself; but you may move it from a point outside itself. God's Love is the point from which to move the soul. Love begets love. Love believed in, produces a return of love: we cannot love because we must. "Must" kills love; but the law of our nature is that we love in reply to love. No one ever yet hated one whom he believed to love him truly. We may be provoked by the pertinacity of an affection which asks what we cannot give; but we cannot hate the true love which does not ask but gives. Now, this is the central truth of Christ's Gospel: "We love Him because He first loved us." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "God is love."

It is the one, almost only struggle of religious life, to believe this. In spite of all the seeming cruelties of this life; in spite of the clouded mystery in which God has shrouded Himself; in spite of pain, and the stern aspect of human life, and the gathering of thicker darkness and more solemn silence round the soul as life goes on, simply to believe that God is Love, and to hold fast to that, as a man holds on to a rock with a desperate grip when the salt surf and the driving waves sweep over him and take the breath away—I say that is the one fight of Christian life, compared with which all else is easy. When we believe that, human affections are easy. It is easy to be generous, and tolerant, and benevolent, when we are sure of the Heart of God, and when the little love of this life, and its coldnesses, and its unreturned affections are more than made up to us by the certainty that our Father's Love is ours. But when we lose sight of that, though but for a moment, the heart sours, and men seem no longer worth the loving: and wrongs are magnified, and injuries cannot be forgiven, and life itself drags on, a mere death in life. A man may doubt anything and everything,

and still be blessed, provided only he holds fast to that conviction. Let all drift from him like seaweed on life's ocean. So long as he reposes on the assurance of the eternal faithfulness of the Eternal Charity, his spirit at least cannot drift. There are moments, I humbly think, when we understand those triumphant words of St. Paul, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

II. What charity does.

It covereth a multitude of sins.

Now the only question is, *whose* sins does charity cover? Is it that the sins of the charitable man are covered by his charity in God's sight? Or is it the sins of others over which charity throws a mantle so as not to see them?

Some wise and good men have said the first. Love obliterates sin in the sight of God; and assuredly it *might* be this that St. Peter meant. No doubt whole years of folly we outlive "in His unerring sight, who measures life by love." Recollect our Master's own words,—"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her: *for* she loved much."

Nevertheless, that does not seem to be the meaning of this passage. A large number of deep thinkers have been convinced that St. Peter is here describing Christianity, and the description which he gives of it as most characteristic is, that it hides out of sight, and refuses to contemplate, a multitude of sins which malevolence would delight to see. It throws a veil over them and covers them. At all events, this is true of Christian charity: and we shall consider the passage in that sense to-day.

There are three ways, at least, in which Love covers sin.

1. In refusing to see small faults.

Every man has his faults, his failings, peculiarities, eccentricities. Every one of us finds himself crossed by such failings of others, from hour to hour. And if he were to resent them all, or even notice all, life would be intolerable. If for every outburst of hasty temper, and for every rudeness that wounds us in our daily path, we were to demand an apology, require an explanation, or resent it by retaliation, daily intercourse would be impossible. The very science of

social life consists in that gliding tact which avoids contact with the sharp angularities of character, which does not argue about such things, does not seek to adjust or cure them all, but covers them, as if it did not see.

Exceedingly wise was that conduct of the Roman proconsul at Corinth which we read of in the Acts. The Jews, with Sosthenes at their head, had brought a charge of heresy against the Christians, and tried it at the Roman law. Gallio perceived that it was a vexatious one, and dismissed it; drove them from the judgment seat. Whereupon the Greeks, indignant at the paltry virulence of the accusation, took Sosthenes, in his way from the judgment seat, and beat him even in Gallio's presence. It is written, "Gallio cared for none of these things." He took no notice. He would not see. It was doubtless illegal and tumultuous, a kind of contempt of court—a great offence in Roman law. But Gallio preferred permitting a wholesome outburst of healthy indignation, to carrying out the law in its letter. For he knew that in that popular riot human nature was throwing off an incubus. It was a kind of irregular justice, excusable because of its provocation. And so Gallio would not see. He *covered* the transgression in a wise and wilful blindness.

That which the Roman magistrate did from wise policy, the Christian spirit does in a diviner way. It throws over such things a cloak of love. It knows when it is wise not to see. That microscopic distinctness in which all faults appear to captious men, who are for ever blaming, dissecting, complaining, disappears in the large, calm gaze of Love. And oh! it is this spirit which our Christian society lacks, and which we shall never get till we begin each one with his own heart. What we want is, in one word, that graceful tact and Christian art which can bear and forbear.

That was a rude, "unpardonable" insult offered by Peter to his Master when he denied Him. In His hour of trial, he refused to seem even to know Him. We should have said, I will never forget that. The Divine charity covered all. Ask ye how? "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep."

2. Love covers sin by making large allowances.

In all evil there is a "soul of goodness." Most evil is perverted good. For instance, extravagance is generosity carried to excess. Revenge is sometimes a sense of justice which has put no restraint upon itself. Woman's worst fault is perverted self-sacrifice. Incaution comes from innocence. Now there are some men who see all the evil, and never trace, never give themselves the trouble of suspecting the root of goodness out of which it sprung. There are others who love to go deep down, and see *why* a man came to do wrong, and whether there was not some excuse, or some redeeming cause: in order that they may be just. Just, as "God is just, *and* the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Not as the passage is sometimes quoted—just, and *yet* the justifier; as if there were some difficulty in reconciling God's justice and God's mercy: but just *and* the justifier, just and therefore the justifier. Merciful because just.

Now human life, as it presents itself to these two different eyes, the eye of one who sees only evil, and that of him who sees evil as perverted good, is two different things. Take an instance. Not many years ago, a gifted English writer presented us with a history of Ancient Christianity. To his eye the early Church presented one great idea, almost only one. He saw corruption written everywhere. In the history of the ascetics, of the nuns, of the hermits, of the early bishops, he saw nothing noble, nothing aspiring. Everywhere the one dark spectacle of the Man of Sin. In public and in private life, in theology and practice, within and without, everywhere pollution. Another historian, a foreigner, has written the history of the same times, with an intellect as piercing to discover the very first germ of error, but with a calm, large heart, which saw the good out of which the error sprung, and loved to dwell upon it, delighting to trace the lineaments of God, and discern His spirit working where another could see only the spirit of the Devil. And you rise from the two books with different views of the world; from the one, considering the world as a devil's

world, corrupting towards destruction; from the other, notwithstanding all, feeling triumphantly that it is God's world, and that His Spirit works gloriously below it all. You rise from the study with different feelings: from the one, inclined to despise your species; from the other, able joyfully to understand in part, why God so loved the world, and what there is in man to love, and what there is, even in the lost, to seek and save.

Now that is the "charity which covereth a multitude of sins."

It understands by sympathy. It is that glorious nature which has affinity with good under all forms, and loves to find it, to believe in it, and to see it. And therefore such men—God's rare and best ones—learn to make allowances; not from weak sentiment, which calls wrong right, but from that heavenly charity which sees right lying at the root of wrong. So the Apostle Paul learned to be candid even towards himself. "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." His very bigotry and persecuting spirit could be justified by God, and by men who see like God. It was wrong, very wrong; he did not palliate it; he felt that it had made him "the chief of sinners," but he discerned that his had been zeal directed wrongly,—not hate, but inverted love.

So too, over the dark grave of Saul the suicide, the love of friendship could shed one ray of hope. He who remembered of Saul, only his nobler nature and his earlier days, when his desolate character was less ambiguous,—the man after God's own heart—whose love refused to part with the conviction that that light which was from God was not quenched for ever, though it had set in clouds and thick darkness—dared to say, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." Would you or I have dared to hope over a grave like Saul's? So too, over the grave of the prophet whose last act was disobedience, love still dared to hope, and the surviving prophet remembered only that he had shared the gift of prophecy with himself. "Alas, my *brother!*" A

sinner, who had died in sin, but as our own Burial Service nobly dares to say, in the hope of intense charity, "To rest in Thee, as our hope is this our brother doth." And so, lastly, in the blackest guilt the earth has seen—in memory of which we, in our Christian charity, after eighteen hundred years, brand the descendant Jews with a curse, which is only slowly disappearing from our minds—there was one Eye which could discern a ground on which to make allowance, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Let us dismiss from our minds one false suspicion. The man who can be most charitable is not the man who is himself most lax. Deep knowledge of human nature tells us it is exactly the reverse. He who shows the rough and thorny road to heaven, is he who treads the primrose path himself. Be sure that it is the severe and pitiless judge and censor of others' faults, on whom, at a venture, you may most safely fix the charge, "Thou art the man!" I know not why, but unrelenting severity proves guilt rather than innocence. How much purity was proved by David's sentence of an imaginary criminal to death? How much, by the desire of those Pharisees to stone the woman taken in adultery? Convicted by their own consciences, they went out one by one; yet they had longed to stone her. No. Be sure you must be free from sin in proportion as you would judge with the allowance and the charity of Christ Jesus. "Tempted in all points, yet without sin." "*Wherefore* also, He is a merciful High Priest."

3. Lastly, charity can tolerate even intolerance.

Let no man think that he can be tolerant or charitable as a matter of self-indulgence. For real charity and real toleration he must pay a price. So long as they are merely negative—so long as they mean only the permission to every one to think his own thoughts and go his own way—the world will bear them. But so soon as charity becomes action, and toleration becomes earnest, basing themselves on a principle, even this—the conviction that at the root of many an error there lies a truth, and within much evil a

central heart of goodness, and below unwise and even opposite forms, the same essential meaning—so soon Charity and Toleration exasperate the world secular, or so-called religious.

For instance, if with St. Paul, you affirm, "He that observeth the day, observeth it to the Lord; and he that observeth not the day, to the Lord he observeth it not," tolerating both the observance and the non-observance, when you perceive the desire of doing God's will existing in both, you cannot avoid the charge of being careless about the question of the sanctities of a day of rest. Or if, with St. Paul, you say of some superstitious idolatry, that men ignorantly worship God in it, their worship being true, their form false—you cannot avoid the stigma of seeming for the time to be tending to that idolatry. Or if, with the Son of God, you recognize the enthusiasm of nature, which passion had led astray in devious paths, you cannot escape the imputation of being "a friend of publicans and sinners." This is the price which a man must pay for Charity. His Master could not escape the price, nor can he.

And then comes the last and most difficult lesson of Love, to make allowances even for the uncharitable. For surely below all that uncharitableness which is so common, there is often a germ of the Life of Love; and beneath that intolerance, which may often wound ourselves, a loving and a candid eye may discern zeal for God. Therefore St. Paul saw even in the Jews, his bitterest foes, that "they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." And therefore St. Stephen prayed, with his last breath, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Earth has not a spectacle more glorious or more fair to show than this—Love tolerating intolerance; Charity covering, as with a veil, even the sin of the lack of charity.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP

MALACHI iii. 16.—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."

THE first division of our subject is suggested by the word "*then*." When? They did thus in the times of Malachi. It is only in reference to those times that we can extract the true lesson from the conduct of the holy men whose behaviour he praises. We will consider—

I. The times of Malachi.
II. The patience of the saints in evil times.

I. Not much is known of the Prophet Malachi, or his exact date. We are sure, however, that he was the last prophet of the old dispensation. He lived somewhere between the restoration from captivity and the coming of Christ.

Thus much we know of those times from history:—The Jews were restored. From chap. iii. v. 10, we learn that the Temple had been rebuilt. But Israel's grandeur was gone, although still enjoying outward prosperity. The nation had sunk into a state of political degradation, and had become successively subject to the Persians, Syrians, Romans. It is precisely that political state in which national virtues do not thrive, and national decay is sure. (Italy—Spain.) They had a glorious past. They had the enlightenment of a present high civilization. But with this there was a want of unity, manhood, and simple virtues. There was just sufficient gallingness in the yoke to produce faction and sullenness; but not enough curtailment of all physical comforts to rouse the nation as one man to reconquer

freedom. It was a state in which there was no visible Divine interference.

Compare this period of Israel's history with all which had preceded it. These 400 years belong to profane history. The writings of that period are not reckoned inspired, so widely do they differ from the Scripture tone. There were no prophets, no flood of light, "no open vision." The Word of God was precious as in that time between the death of Joshua and the calling of Samuel.[1] Except this solitary voice, prophecy had hushed her harp.

Now, what was given to Israel in that period?

I reply, Retrospect, Pause, and Prospect.

Retrospect, in the sublime past which God had given her for her experience. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." On them they were to live—their nation's sacred history; God's guidance and faithfulness; the sure truth that obedience was best.

Prospect, in the expectation of better times.

Dim, vague hints of the Old Testament had pointed them to a coming revelation—a day in which God should be nearer to them, in which society should be more pure. An Advent, in short.

And between these two there was a *Pause*.

They were left by God to use the grace and knowledge already given by Him.

Now this is parallel to God's usual modes of dealing. For example, the Pause of 400 years in the land of Egypt, between the bright days when Abraham talked with God, and the deliverance by Moses.

The Pause in Canaan when the Israelitish commonwealth was left, like a building to settle down before being built higher, between the times of Joshua and of Samuel.

The Pause in the Captivity, and now again a Pause.

A pause after each revelation until the next.

So, in the natural world. Just as in summer there is a gush of nature's forces and a shooting forth; and then the

[1] Four hundred and thirty-one years.

long autumn and winter, in which is no growth, but an opportunity, taught by past experience, for the husbandman to manure his ground, and sow his seed, and to wait for a new outpouring of life upon the world.

And just as in human life, between its marked lessons there is a pause, in which we live upon past experience—looking back and looking on. Experience and hope, that is human life: as in youth, expecting manhood, and then looking for future changes in our condition, character, so in all God's revelation system, there have been periods of "open vision," and periods of pause—waiting; men are left to experience and hope.

It is in vain that we have studied God's Word if we do not perceive that our own day and circumstances are parallel with those of the Prophet Malachi. We live in the World's fourth great Pause.

Miracles have ceased. Prophecy is silent. The Son of God is ascended. Apostles are no longer here to apply infallible judgment to each new circumstance as it arises, as St. Paul did to the state of the Corinthian Church.

But we are left to the great Gospel principles which have been already given, and which are to be our food till the next flood of God's Spirit, the next Revelation—that which the Scripture calls "the Second Advent."

And the parallel holds in another respect. The Jews had but undefined hints of that which was to be. Yet they knew the general outlines and character of the coming time; they knew that it would be a searching time, it was to be the "Refiner's" day; they knew that he should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children: and they knew that the messenger age must be preceded by a falling back on simpler life, and a return to first principles, as Malachi had predicted, and as John the Baptist called them to. They knew that it was an age in which the true sacrifice would be offered.

And so now—we know not yet what shall be; "but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for

we shall see Him as He is." "And every man that hath this hope in Him *purifieth* himself."

We know that it will be the union of the human race—they will be "*one fold*."

This is the outline and character of the Revelation; and we may work at least, *towards* it. "Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day." "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." To strive after personal purity and attempt at producing unity, that is our work.

We rest on that we have, and hope for that we see not. And only for the glimpse that hope gives us of that, is life worth having.

II. Let us consider the conduct of different classes in these evil times.

1. Some lived recklessly.

Foremost among these were the priests, as has been always found in evil times. The riot of a priest is worse than that of the laity. Mutual corruption. Against the priests Malachi's denunciations are chiefly directed.

He speaks of the profanation of the sacred places (chap. i. 6, 7). Of sacrifice degraded (verses 12, 13). Vice honoured (chap. ii. 17). In that they called good evil and evil good. By these men belief in God was considered ridiculous.

And then it was that one of those glorious promises was made, to be fulfilled in after times. Malachi foresaw that the Gentiles would take up the neglected service (chap. i. 10, 11), and the vision of an universal Kingdom of God became the comfort of the faithful few.

2. Others lived uselessly, because despondingly.

The languor and despair of their hearts is read in the words (chap. iii. 14, 15); and indeed it is not surprising: to what point could good men look with satisfaction? The

nation was enslaved, and worse—they had become slaves in spirit. Their ancient purity was gone. The very priests had become atheists. Where was the promise of His coming? Such, too, is the question of these latter times. And our reply is from past experience.

That dark day passed, and a glorious Revelation dawned on the world. From what has been, we justly infer what will be. Promises fulfilled are a ground of hope for those yet unfulfilled. Where is the promise *now* of holier times? Yes, but remember the question seemed to be just as unanswerable then; it was just as unanswerable in the days of the Judges, and in the captivity in Egypt and in Babylon.

This "Scripture was written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come." Then the consolation of St. Peter becomes intelligible, "We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

3. But in these evil times there were a few who compared with one another their hopes, and sought strength in Christian communion and fellowship. Of them the text speaks.

This communion of saints is twofold: it includes church fellowship and personal friendships.

It is plain that from church fellowship in those days they could gain little. Unity there was not, but only disunion. Over that state Malachi lamented in that touching appeal—"Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" (Mal. ii. 10)—Israel had forgotten that she was a family.

And it is true that in our day church fellowship is almost only a name. The Christianity of the nation does not bind us as individuals. Well,—does the Church? Are there many traces of a common feeling? When church privileges are insisted on to produce unity, do they not produce division? Are not these words of the Prophet true of us? Where are the traces of Christian brotherhood?

Here—in this town? here—in this congregation? at the Holy Supper which we join in to-day? Shall we meet to get *private* good, or to feel we are partakers of the same Body and the same Blood? Therefore to insist on church union as the remedy would be to miss the special meaning of this verse. The malady of our disunion has gone too deep to be cured by you or me.

We will consider it, therefore, in reference to Christian friendship. We find that within the outward Jewish Church there was an inner circle, knit together by closer bonds than circumcision or the passover—by an union of religious sympathies "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another:" they "thought upon His name."

Let us consider the blessing of Christian friendship. In such times it discharges a double office.

1. For the interchange of Christian hope and Christian feeling. It is dreary to serve God alone; desolate to have no one in our own circle or family from whom we can receive sympathy in our hopes. Hopes *die*.

2. It is a mighty instrument in guarding against temptation. It is a safeguard, in the way of example, and also as a standard of opinion. We should become tainted by the world if it were not for Christian friends.

Therefore, in conclusion, cultivate *familiar* intimacy only with those who love good and God.

Doubtless there are circumstances which determine intimacies, such as rank, station, similarity of tastes. But one thing must be paramount to and modify them all—Communion in God. Not in a sectarian spirit. We are not to form ourselves into a party with those who think as we do, and use the formulas that we do. But the spirit of the text requires us to feel strongly that there is a mighty gulf between those who love and those who do not love God. To the one class we owe civility, courtesy, kindness, even tenderness. It is only those who love the Lord who should find in our hearts a home.

PURITY

TITUS i. 15.—"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

FOR the evils of this world there are two classes of remedies—one is the world's, the other is God's. The world proposes to remedy evil by adjusting the circumstances of this life to man's desires. The world says, give us a perfect set of *circumstances*, and then we shall have a set of perfect men. This principle lies at the root of the system called Socialism. Socialism proceeds on the principle that all moral and even physical evil arises from unjust laws. If the cause be remedied, the effect will be good. But Christianity throws aside all that as merely chimerical. It proves that the fault is not in outward circumstances, but in ourselves. Like the wise physician, who, instead of busying himself with transcendental theories to improve the climate, and the outward circumstances of man, endeavours to relieve and get rid of the tendencies of disease which are from within, Christianity, leaving all outward circumstances to ameliorate themselves, fastens its attention on the spirit which has to deal with them. Christ has declared that the kingdom of heaven is from within. He said to the Pharisee, "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within ye are full of extortion and excess."

The remedy for all this is a large and liberal charity, so overflowing that "Unto the pure all things are pure." To internal purity all external things *become* pure.

The principle that St. Paul has here laid down is, that each man is the creator of his own world; he walks in a universe of his own creation.

As the free air is to one out of health the cause of cold and diseased lungs, so to the healthy man it is a source of greater vigour. The rotten fruit is sweet to the worm, but

nauseous to the palate of man. It is the same air and the same fruit acting differently upon different persons. To different men a different world—to one all pollution—to another all purity. To the noble all things are noble, to the mean all things are contemptible.

The subject divides itself into two parts.

I. The apostle's principle.
II. The application of the principle.

Here we have the same principle again; each man creates his own world. Take it in its simplest form. The eye creates the outward world it sees. We see not things as they are, but as God has made the eye to receive them.

In its strictest sense, the creation of a new man is the creation of a new universe. Conceive an eye so constructed as that the planets and all within them should be minutely seen, and all that is near should be dim and invisible like things seen through a telescope, or as we see through a magnifying glass the plumage of the butterfly, and the bloom upon the peach; then it is manifestly clear that we have called into existence actually a new *creation*, and not new objects. The mind's eye creates a world for itself.

Again, the visible world presents a different aspect to each individual man. You will say that the same things you see are seen by all—that the forest, the valley, the flood, and the sea, are the same to all; and yet all these things so seen, to different minds, are a myriad of different universes. One man sees in that noble river an emblem of eternity; he closes his lips and feels that God is there. Another sees nothing in it but a very convenient road for transporting his spices, silks, and merchandise. To one this world appears useful, to another beautiful. Whence comes the difference? From the soul within us. It can make of this world a vast chaos—"a mighty maze without a plan;" or a mere machine—a collection of lifeless forces; or it can make it the Living Vesture of God, the tissue through which He can become visible to us. In the spirit in which

we look on it the world is an arena for mere self-advancement, or a place for noble deeds, in which self is forgotten, and God is all.

Observe, this effect is traceable even in that produced by our different and changeful moods. We make and unmake a world more than once in the space of a single day. In trifling moods all seems trivial. In serious moods all seems solemn. Is the song of the nightingale merry or plaintive? Is it the voice of joy, or the harbinger of gloom? Sometimes one, and sometimes the other, according to our different moods. We hear the ocean furious or exulting. The thunder-claps are grand, or angry, according to the different states of our mind. Nay, the very church-bells chime sadly or merrily, as our associations determine. They speak the language of our passing moods. The young adventurer revolving sanguine plans upon the milestone, hears them speak to him as God did to Hagar in the wilderness, bidding him back to perseverance and greatness. The soul spreads its own hue over everything; the shroud or wedding garment of nature is woven in the loom of our own feelings. This universe is the express image and direct counterpart of the souls that dwell in it. Be noble-minded, and all Nature replies—I am divine, the child of God—be thou, too, His child, and noble. Be mean, and all Nature dwindles into a contemptible smallness.

In the second place, there are two ways in which this principle is true.

To the pure, all things and all persons are pure, because their purity makes all seem pure.

There are some who go through life complaining of this world; they say they have found nothing but treachery and deceit; the poor are ungrateful, and the rich are selfish. Yet we do not find such the best men. Experience tells us that each man most keenly and unerringly detects in others the vice with which he is most familiar himself.

Persons seem to each man what he is himself. One who suspects hypocrisy in the world is rarely transparent; the man constantly on the watch for cheating is generally

dishonest; he who suspects impurity is prurient. This is the principle to which Christ alludes when he says, "Give alms of such things as ye have; and behold all things are clean unto you."

Have a large charity! Large "charity hopeth all things." Look at that sublime apostle who saw the churches of Ephesus and Thessalonica pure, because he saw them in his own large love, and painted them, not as they were, but as his heart filled up the picture; he viewed them in the light of his own nobleness, as representations of his own purity.

Once more, to the pure all *things* are pure, as well as all persons. That which is natural lies not in things, but in the minds of men. There is a difference between prudery and modesty. Prudery detects wrong where no wrong is; the wrong lies in the thoughts, and not in the objects. There is something of over-sensitiveness and over-delicacy which shows not innocence, but an inflammable imagination. And men of the world cannot understand that those subjects and thoughts which to them are full of torture, can be harmless, suggesting nothing evil to the pure in heart.

Here, however, beware! No sentence of Scripture is more frequently in the lips of persons who permit themselves much license, than the text, "To the pure, all things are pure." Yes, all things natural, but not artificial—scenes which pamper the tastes, which excite the senses. Innocence feels healthily. To it all nature is pure. But, just as the dove trembles at the approach of the hawk, and the young calf shudders at the lion never seen before, so innocence shrinks instinctively from what is wrong by the same divine instinct. If that which is wrong seems pure, then the heart is not pure, but vitiated. To the right minded all that is right in the course of this world seems pure. Abraham, looking forward to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, entreated that it might be averted, and afterwards acquiesced! To the disordered mind "all things are out of course." This is the spirit which pervades

the whole of the Ecclesiastes. There were two things which were perpetually suggesting themselves to the mind of Solomon; the intolerable sameness of this world, and the constant desire for change. And yet that same world, spread before the serene eye of God, was pronounced to be all "very good."

This disordered universe is the picture of your own mind. We make a wilderness by encouraging artificial wants, by creating sensitive and selfish feelings; then we project everything stamped with the impress of our own feelings, and we gather the whole of creation into our own pained being—"the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The world you complain of as impure and wrong is not God's world, but your world; the blight, the dullness, the blank, are all your own. The light which is in you has become darkness, and therefore the light itself is dark.

Again, to the pure, all things not only seem pure, but are really so because they are made such.

1. As regards persons.

It is a marvellous thing to see how a pure and innocent heart purifies all that it approaches. The most ferocious natures are soothed and tamed by innocence. And so with human beings, there is a delicacy so pure, that vicious men in its presence become almost pure; all of purity which is in them is brought out; like attaches itself to like. The pure heart becomes a centre of attraction, round which similar atoms gather, and from which dissimilar ones are repelled. A corrupt heart elicits in an hour all that is bad in us; a spiritual one brings out and draws to itself all that is best and purest. Such was Christ. He stood in the world, the Light of the world, to which all sparks gradually gathered. He stood in the presence of impurity, and men became pure. Note this in the history of Zaccheus. In answer to the invitation of the Son of man, he says, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have done wrong to any man I restore him fourfold." So also the Scribe, "Well, Master, thou hast well said, there is one God, and

there is none other than He." To the pure Saviour, all was pure. "He was lifted up on high, and drew all men unto Him."

Lastly, all situations are pure to the pure. According to the world, some professions are reckoned honourable, and some dishonourable. Men judge according to a standard merely conventional, and not by that of moral rectitude. Yet it was, in truth, the men who were in these situations which made them such. In the days of the Redeemer, the publican's occupation was a degraded one, merely because low base men filled that place. But since He was born into the world a poor, labouring man, poverty is noble and dignified, and toil is honourable. To the man who feels that "the king's daughter is all glorious within," no outward situation can seem inglorious or impure.

There are three words which express almost the same thing, but whose meaning is entirely different. These are, the gibbet, the scaffold, and the cross. So far as we know, none die on the gibbet but men of dishonourable and base life. The scaffold suggests to our minds the noble deaths of our greatest martyrs. The cross was once a gibbet, but it is now the highest name we have, because He hung on it. Christ has purified and ennobled the cross. This principle runs through life. It is not the situation which makes the man, but the man who makes the situation. The slave may be a freeman. The monarch may be a slave. Situations are noble or ignoble, as we make them.

From all this subject we learn to understand two things.

Hence we understand the Fall. When man fell, the world fell with him. All creation received a shock. Thorns, briars, and thistles, sprang up. They were there before, but to the now restless and impatient hands of men they became obstacles and weeds. Death, which must ever have existed as a form of dissolution, a passing from one state to another, became a curse; the sting of death was sin—unchanged in itself, it changed in man. A dark, heavy cloud, rested on it—the shadow of his own guilty heart.

Hence, too, we understand the Millennium. The Bible

says that these things are not to be for ever. There are glorious things to come. Just as in my former illustration, the alteration of the eye called new worlds into being, so now nothing more is needed than to re-create the soul—the mirror on which all things are reflected. There is realized the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, I create all things new," "new heavens and a new earth."

The conclusion of this verse proves to us why all these new creations were called into being—"wherein dwelleth righteousness." To be righteous makes all things new. We do not want a new world, we want *new hearts*. Let the Spirit of God purify society, and to the pure all things will be pure. The earth will put off the look of weariness and gloom which it has worn so long, and then the glorious language of the prophets will be fulfilled—"The forests will break out with singing, and the desert will blossom as the rose."

CHRISTIAN CASUISTRY

1 CORINTHIANS vii. 18–24.—"Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise also he that is called being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God."

THE whole of these seven chapters of the First Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, is occupied with questions of Christian casuistry. In the application of the principles of Christianity to the varying circumstances of

life, innumerable difficulties had arisen, and the Corinthians upon these difficulties had put certain questions to the Apostle Paul. This seventh chapter contains the apostle's answer to many of these questions. There are, however, two great divisions into which these answers generally fall. St. Paul makes a distinction between those things which he speaks by commandment and those which he speaks only by permission; there is a distinction between what he says as from the Lord, and what only from himself; between that which he speaks to them as being taught of God, and that which he speaks only as a servant, "called of the Lord and faithful." It is manifestly plain that there are many questions in which *right* and *wrong* are not variable, but indissoluble and fixed; while there are questions, on the other hand, where these terms are not fixed, but variable, fluctuating, altering, dependent upon circumstances. As, for instance, those in which the apostle teaches in the present chapter the several duties and advantages of marriage and celibacy. There may be circumstances in which it is the duty of a Christian man to be married, there are others in which it may be his duty to remain unmarried. For instance, in the case of a missionary it may be right to be married rather than unmarried; in the case, on the other hand, of a pauper, not having the wherewithal to bring up and maintain a family, it may be proper to remain unmarried. You will observe, however, that no fixed law can be laid down upon this subject. We cannot say marriage is a Christian duty, nor celibacy is a Christian duty; nor that it is in every case the duty of a missionary to be married, or of a pauper to be unmarried. All these things must vary according to circumstances, and the duty must be stated not universally, but with reference to those circumstances.

These, therefore, are questions of casuistry, which depend upon the particular *case:* from which word the term "casuistry" is derived. On these points the apostle speaks, not by commandment, but by permission; not as speaking by God's command, but as having the Spirit of God. A distinction has sometimes been drawn with reference to this

chapter between that which the apostle speaks by inspiration, and what he speaks as a man uninspired. The distinction, however, is an altogether false one, and beside the question. For the real distinction is not between inspired and uninspired, but between a *decision* in matters of Christian duty, and *advice* in matters of Christian prudence. It is abundantly evident that God cannot give advice; He can only issue a command. God cannot say, "It is better to do this;" His perfections demand something absolute: "Thou shalt *do* this; thou shalt *not* do this." Whensoever, therefore, we come to advice there is introduced the human element rather than the divine. In all such cases, therefore, as are dependent upon circumstances the apostle speaks not as inspired, but as uninspired; as one whose judgment we have no right to find fault with or to cavil at, who lays down what is a matter of Christian prudence, and not a bounden and universal duty. The matter of the present discourse will take in various verses in this chapter—from the tenth to the twenty-fourth verse—leaving part of the commencement and the conclusion for our consideration, if God permit, next Sunday.

There are three main questions on which the apostle here gives his inspired decision. The first decision is concerning the sanctity of the marriage-bond between two Christians. His verdict is given in the tenth verse: "Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband." He lays down this principle, that the union is an indissoluble one. Upon such a subject, Christian brethren, before a mixed congregation, it is manifestly evident that we can only speak in general terms. It will be sufficient to say that marriage is of all earthly unions almost the only one permitting of no change but that of death. It is that engagement in which man exerts his most awful and solemn power,—the power of responsibility which belongs to him as one that shall give account,—the power of abnegating the right to change,—the power of parting with his freedom,—the power of doing *that* which in this world can never be reversed. And yet it

is perhaps that relationship which is spoken of most frivolously, and entered into most carelessly and most wantonly. It is not an union merely between two creatures, it is an union between two spirits; and the intention of that bond is to perfect the nature of both, by supplementing their deficiencies with the force of contrast, giving to each sex those excellencies in which it is naturally deficient; to the one strength of character and firmness of moral will, to the other sympathy, meekness, tenderness. And just so solemn, and just so glorious as these ends are for which the union was contemplated and intended, just so terrible are the consequences if it be perverted and abused. For there is no earthly relationship which has so much power to ennoble and to exalt. Very strong language does the apostle use in this chapter respecting it: "What knoweth thou, O wife, whether thou shalt *save* thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" The very power of *saving* belongs to this relationship. And, on the other hand, there is no earthly relationship which has so much power to wreck and ruin the soul. For there are two rocks in this world of ours on which the soul must either anchor or be wrecked. The one is God; the other is the sex opposite to itself. The one is the "Rock of Ages," on which if the human soul anchors it lives the blessed life of faith; against which if the soul be dashed and broken, there ensues the wreck of Atheism—the worst ruin of the soul. The other rock is of another character. Blessed is the man, blessed is the woman whose life-experience has taught a confiding belief in the excellencies of the sex opposite to their own—a blessedness second only to the blessedness of salvation. And the ruin in the other case is second only to the ruin of everlasting perdition—the same wreck and ruin of the soul. These, then, are the two tremendous alternatives: on the one hand the possibility of securing in all sympathy and tenderness, the laying of that step on which man rises towards his perfection; on the other hand the blight of all sympathy, to be dragged down to earth, and forced to become frivolous and common-place; to lose all zest and

earnestness in life, to have heart and life degraded by mean and perpetually-recurring sources of disagreement; these are the two alternatives, and it is the worst of these alternatives which the young risk when they form an inconsiderate union, excusably indeed—because through inexperience; and it is the worst of these alternatives which parents risk—not excusably but inexcusably—when they bring up their children with no higher view of what that tie is, than the merely prudential one of a rich and honourable marriage.

The second decision which the apostle makes respecting another of the questions proposed to him by the Corinthians, is as to the sanctity of the marriage bond between a Christian and one who is a heathen. When Christianity first entered into our world, and was little understood, it seemed to threaten the dislocation and alteration of all existing relationships. Many difficulties arose; such, for instance, as the one here started. When of two heathen parties only one was converted to Christianity, the question arose, What in this case is the duty of the Christian? Is not the duty separation? Is not the marriage in itself null and void? as if it were an union between one dead and one living? And that perpetual contact with a heathen, and therefore an enemy of God, is not that, in a relation so close and intimate, perpetual defilement? The apostle decides this with his usual inspired wisdom. He decides that the marriage-bond is sacred still. Diversities of religious opinion, even the farthest and widest diversity, cannot sanction separation. And so he decides in the 13th verse, "The woman which hath an husband that believeth not, if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." And, "if any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away," v. 12. Now for us in the present day, the decision on this point is not of so much importance as the reason which is adduced in support of it. The proof which the apostle gives of the sanctity of the marriage is exceedingly remarkable. Practically it amounts to this:—If this were no marriage, but an unhallowed alliance, it would follow as a necessary consequence

that the offspring could not be reckoned in any sense as the children of God; but, on the other hand, it is the instinctive, unwavering conviction of every Christian parent, united though he or she may be to a heathen, "My child is a child of God," or, in the Jewish form of expression, "My child is *clean*." So the apostle says, "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy," for it follows, if the children are holy in this sense of dedicated to God, and are capable of Christian relationship, then the marriage relation was not unhallowed, but sacred and indissoluble. The value of this argument in the present day depends on its relation to baptism. The great question we are deciding in the present day may be reduced to a very few words. This question—the Baptismal question—is this:—whether we are baptized because we *are* the children of God, or, whether we are the children of God because we are *baptized;* whether, in other words, when the Catechism of the Church of England says that by baptism we are "made the children of God," we are to understand thereby that we are made something which we were not before—magically and mysteriously changed; or, whether we are to understand that we are made the Children of God by baptism in the same sense that a sovereign is made a sovereign by coronation. Here the apostle's argument is full, decisive, and unanswerable. He does not say that these children were Christian, or clean, because they were *baptized*, but they were the children of God because they were the children of one Christian parent; nay, more than that, such children could scarcely ever have been baptized, because, if the rite met with opposition from one of the parents, it would be an entire and perfect veto to the possibility of baptism. You will observe that the very fundamental idea out of which infant-baptism arises is, that the impression produced upon the mind and character of the child by the Christian parent, makes the child one of a Christian community; and, therefore, as Peter argued that Cornelius had

received the Holy Ghost, and so was to be baptized, just in the same way, as they are adopted into the Christian family, and receive a Christian impression, the children of Christian parents are also to be baptized.

Observe also the important truth which comes out collaterally from this argument—namely, the sacredness of the impression, which arises from the close connection between parent and child. Stronger far than education—going on before education can commence, possibly from the very first moments of consciousness, we begin to impress ourselves on our children. Our character, voice, features, qualities—modified, no doubt, by entering into a new human being, and into a different organization—are impressed upon our children. Not the inculcation of opinions, but much rather the formation of principles, and of the tone of character, the derivation of qualities. Physiologists tell us of the derivation of the mental qualities from the father, and of the moral from the mother. But, be this as it may, there is scarcely one here who cannot trace back his present religious character to some impression, in early life, from one or other of his parents—a tone, a look, a word, a habit, or even, it may be, a bitter, miserable exclamation of remorse.

The third decision which the apostle gives, the third principle which he lays down, is but the development of the last. Christianity, he says, does not interfere with existing relationships. First, he lays down the principle, and then unfolds the principle in two ways, ecclesiastically and civilly. The principle he lays down in almost every variety of form. In the 17th verse, "As God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk." In the 20th verse, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." In the 24th verse, "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God." This is the principle. Christianity was not to interfere with existing relationships; Christian men were to remain in those relationships in which they were, and in them to develope the inward spirituality of the Christian life. Then

he applies this principle in two ways. First of all, ecclesiastically. With respect to their church, or ecclesiastical affairs, he says—"Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any man in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised." In other words, the Jews, after their conversion, were to continue Jews, if they would. Christianity required no change in these outward things, for it was not in *these* that the depth and reality of the kingdom of Christ consisted. So the Apostle Paul took Timothy and circumcised him; so, also, he used all the Jewish customs with which he was familiar, and performed a vow, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, "having shorn his head in Cenchrea; for he had a vow." It was not his opinion that it was the duty of a Christian to overthrow the Jewish system. He knew that the Jewish system could not last, but what he wanted was to vitalize the system—to throw into it not a Jewish, but a Christian feeling; and so doing, he might continue in it so long as it would hold together. And so it was no doubt, with all the other apostles. We have no evidence that, before the destruction of the Jewish polity, there was any attempt made by them to overthrow the Jewish external religion. They kept the Jewish Sabbath, and observed the Jewish ritual. One of them, James, the Christian Bishop of Jerusalem, though a Christian, was even among the Jews remarkable and honourable for the regularity with which he observed all his Jewish duties. Now let us apply this to modern duties. The great desire among men now, appears to be to alter institutions, to have perfect institutions, as if *they* would make perfect men. Mark the difference between this feeling and that of the apostle, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." We are called to be members of the Church of England—what is our duty now? What would Paul have done? Is this our duty—to put such questions to ourselves as these? "Is there any single, particular sentence in the service of my Church with which I do not entirely agree? Is there any single ceremony with which my whole soul does not go along? If so,

then is it my duty to leave it at once?" No, my brethren, all that we have to do is to say, "All our existing institutions are those under which God has placed us, under which we are to mould our lives according to His will." It is our duty to vitalize our forms, to throw into them a holier, deeper meaning. My Christian brethren, surely no man will get true rest, true repose for his soul in these days of controversy, until he has learned the wise significance of these wise words—"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." He will but gain unrest, he will but disquiet himself, if he says, "I am sinning by continuing in this imperfect system," if he considers it his duty to change his calling if his opinions do not agree in every particular and special point with the system under which God has placed him.

Lastly, the apostle applies this principle civilly. And you will observe he applies it to that civil relationship which, of all others, was the most difficult to harmonize with Christianity—slavery. "Art thou called," he says, "being a servant? Care not for it." Now, in considering this part of the subject we should carry along with us these two recollections. First, we should recollect that Christianity had made much way among this particular class, the class of slaves. No wonder that men cursed with slavery embraced with joy a religion which was perpetually teaching the worth and dignity of the human soul, and declaring that rich and poor, peer and peasant, master and slave, were equal in the sight of God. And yet, great as this growth was, it contained within it elements of danger. It was to be feared, lest men, hearing for ever of brotherhood and Christian equality, should be tempted and excited to throw off the yoke by *force*, and compel their masters and oppressors to do them right.

The other fact we are to keep in remembrance is this—that all this occurred in an age in which slavery had reached its worst and most fearful form, an age in which the emperors were accustomed, not unfrequently, to feed their fish with living slaves; when captives were led to fight in

the amphitheatre with wild beasts or with each other, to glut the Roman appetite for blood upon a Roman holiday. And yet, fearful as it was, the apostle says, "Care not for it." And, fearful as war was in those days, when the soldiers came to John to be baptized, he did not recommend them to join some "Peace Association," to use the modern term; he simply exhorted them to be content with their wages. And hence we understand the way in which Christianity was to work. It interferes indirectly and not directly with existing institutions. No doubt it will at length abolish war and slavery, but there is not one case where we find Christianity interfering with institutions, as such. Even when Onesimus ran away and came to Paul, the apostle sent him back to his master Philemon, not dissolving the connection between them. And then, as a consolation to the servant, he told him of a higher feeling—a feeling that would make him free, with the chain and shackle upon his arm. And so it was possible for the Christian then, as it is now, to be possessed of the highest liberty even under tyranny. It many times occurred that Christian men found themselves placed under an unjust and tyrannical government, and compelled to pay unjust taxes. The Son of Man showed his freedom not by refusing, but by paying them. His glorious liberty could do so without any feeling of degradation, and obey the laws, not because they were right, but because institutions are to be upheld with cordiality.

One thing in conclusion we have to observe. It is possible from all this to draw a most inaccurate conclusion. Some men have spoken of Christianity as if it was entirely indifferent about liberty and all public questions—as if with such things as these Christianity did not concern itself at all. This indifference is not to be found in the Apostle Paul. While he asserts that inward liberty is the only true liberty, he still goes on to say, "If thou mayst be free use it rather." For he well knew that although it was possible for a man to be a high and lofty Christian, even though he were a slave, yet it was not probable that he would be so.

Outward institutions are necessary partly to make a perfect Christian character; and thus Christianity works from what is internal to what is external. It gave to the slave the feeling of his dignity as a man, at the same time it gave to the Christian master a new view of his relation to his slave, and taught him to regard him "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." And so by degrees slavery passed into freed servitude, and freed servitude, under God's blessing, may pass into something else. There are two mistakes which are often made upon this subject; one is, the error of supposing that outward institutions are unnecessary for the formation of character, and the other, that of supposing that they are *all* that is required to form the human soul. If we understand rightly the duty of a Christian man, it is this: to make his brethren free inwardly and outwardly; first inwardly, so that they may become masters of themselves, rulers of their passions, having the power of self-rule and self-control; and then outwardly, so that there may be every power and opportunity of developing the inward life; in the language of the prophet, "To break the rod of the oppressor and let the oppressed go free."

THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

1 CORINTHIANS viii. 7–13.—"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some, with conscience of the idol, unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak conscience ye sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

WE have already divided this chapter into two branches —the former portion of it containing the difference between Christian knowledge and secular knowledge, and the second portion containing the apostolic exposition of the law of Christian conscience. The first of these we endeavoured to expound last Sunday, but it may be well briefly to recapitulate the principles of that discourse in a somewhat different form. Corinth, as we all know and remember, was a city built on the sea coast, having a large and free communication with all foreign nations; and there was also within it, and going on amongst its inhabitants, a free interchange of thought, and a vivid power of communicating the philosophy and truths of those days to each other. Now it is plain that to a society in such a state, and to minds so educated, the gospel of Christ must have presented a peculiar attraction, presenting itself to them as it did, as a law of Christian liberty. And so, in Corinth the gospel had "free course and was glorified," and was received with great joy by almost all men, and by minds of all classes and all sects; and a large number of these attached themselves to the teaching of the Apostle Paul as the most accredited ex-

pounder of Christianity—the "royal law of liberty." But it seems, from what we read in this epistle, that a large number of these men received Christianity as a thing intellectual, and that alone—and not as a thing which touched the conscience, and swayed and purified the affections. And so, this liberty became to them almost *all*—they ran into sin or went to extravagance—they rejoiced in their freedom from the superstitions, the ignorances, and the scruples which bound their weaker brethren; but had no charity—none of that intense charity which characterized the Apostle Paul—for those still struggling in the delusions and darkness from which they themselves were free. More than that, they demanded their right, their Christian liberty of expressing their opinions in the church, merely for the sake of *exhibiting* the Christian graces and spiritual gifts which had been showered upon them so largely; until by degrees those very assemblies became a lamentable exhibition of their own depravity, and led to numerous irregularities which we find severely rebuked by the Apostle Paul. Their women, rejoicing in the emancipation which had been given to the Christian community, laid aside the old habits of attire which had been consecrated so long by Grecian and Jewish custom, and appeared with their heads uncovered in the Christian community. Still further than that, the Lord's Supper exhibited an absence of all solemnity, and seemed more a meeting for licentious gratification, where "one was hungry, and another was drunken"—a place in which earthly drunkenness, the mere enjoyment of the appetites, had taken the place of Christian charity towards each other. And the same feeling—this love of mere liberty—liberty in itself — manifested itself in many other directions. Holding by this freedom, their philosophy taught that the body, that is the flesh, was the only cause of sin; that the soul was holy and pure; and that, therefore, to be free from the body would be entire, perfect, Christian emancipation. And so came in that strange, wrong doctrine, exhibited in Corinth, where immortality was taught separate from, and in opposition to, the doctrine of the resurrection. And

afterwards they went on with their conclusions about liberty to maintain that the body, justified by the sacrifice of Christ, was no longer capable of sin; and that in the evil which was done by the body, the soul had taken no part. And therefore sin was to them but as a name, from which a Christian conscience was to be freed altogether. So that when one of their number had fallen into grievous sin, and had committed fornication, "such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles," so far from being humbled by it, they were "puffed up," as if they were exhibiting to the world an enlightened, true, perfect Christianity—separate from all prejudices. To such a society and to such a state of mind, the Apostle Paul preached in all its length, breadth, and fulness, the humbling doctrines of the Cross of Christ. He taught that knowledge was one thing—that charity was *another* thing; that "knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up." He reminded them that love was the perfection of knowledge, that, "if any man loved God, the same was known of Him." In other words, his teaching came to this: there are two kinds of knowledge; the one the knowledge of the intellect, the other the knowledge of the heart. Intellectually, God never can be known. He must be known by Love—for, "if any man love God the same is known of Him." Here, then, we have arrived in another way at precisely the same conclusion at which we arrived last Sunday. Here are two kinds of knowledge, secular knowledge and Christian knowledge; and Christian knowledge is this—to know by Love.

Let us now consider the remainder of the chapter, which treats of the law of Christian conscience. You will observe that it divides itself into two branches—the first containing an exposition of the law itself, and the second the Christian applications which flow out of this exposition.

I. The way in which the apostle expounds the law of Christian conscience is this:—Guilt is contracted by the soul, in so far as it sins against and transgresses the law of God, by doing that which it believes to be wrong: not so much what *is* wrong as what *appears* to *it* to be wrong.

This is the doctrine distinctly laid down in the 7th and 8th verses. The apostle tells the Corinthians—these strong-minded Corinthians—that the superstitions of their weaker brethren were unquestionably wrong. "Meat," he says, "commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse." He then tells them further, that "there is not in every man that knowledge; for some, with conscience of the idol, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol." Here, then, is an ignorant, mistaken, ill-informed conscience; and yet he goes on to tell them that this conscience, so ill-informed, yet binds the possessor of it: "and their conscience, being weak, is defiled." For example; there could be no harm in eating the flesh of an animal that had been offered to an idol or false god; for a false god is nothing, and it is impossible for it to have contracted positive defilement by being offered to that which is a positive and absolute negation. And yet if any man thought it wrong to eat such flesh, to him it *was* wrong; for in that act there would be a deliberate act of transgression—a deliberate preference of that which was mere enjoyment, to that which was apparently, though it may be only apparently, sanctioned by the law of God. And so it would carry with it all the disobedience, all the guilt, and all the misery which belongs to the doing of an act altogether wrong; or, as St. Paul expresses it, the conscience would become defiled.

Here, then, we arrive at the first distinction—the distinction between absolute and relative right and wrong. Absolute right and absolute wrong, like absolute truth, can each be but *one* and unalterable in the sight of God. The one absolute *right*—the charity of God and the sacrifice of Christ—this, from eternity to eternity must be the sole measure of eternal right. But human right or human wrong, that is, the merit or demerit of any action done by any particular man, must be measured, not by that absolute standard, but as a matter relative to his particular circumstances, the state of the age in which he lives, and his own knowledge of right and wrong. For we come into this

world with a moral sense; or, to speak more Christianly, with a conscience. And yet that will tell us but very little distinctly. It tells us broadly that which is right and that which is wrong, so that every child can understand this. That charity and self-denial are right—this we see recognised in almost every nation. But the boundaries of these two—when and how far self-denial is right—what are the bounds of charity—this it is for different circumstances yet to bring out and determine. And so, it will be found that there is a different standard among different nations and in different ages. That, for example, which was the standard among the Israelites in the earlier ages, and before their settlement in Canaan, was very different from the higher and truer standard of right and wrong recognised by the later prophets. And the standard in the third and fourth centuries after Christ was truly and unquestionably an entirely different one from that recognised in the nineteenth century among ourselves. Let me not be mistaken. I do not say that right and wrong are merely conventional, or merely chronological or geographical, or that they vary with latitude and longitude. I do not say that there ever was or ever can be a nation so utterly blinded and perverted in its moral sense as to acknowledge that which is wrong—seen and known to be wrong—as right; or, on the other hand, to profess that which is seen and understood as right, to be wrong. But what I do say is this: that the form and aspect in which different deeds appear, so vary, that there will be for ever a change and alteration in men's opinions, and that which is really most generous may seem most base, and that which is really most base may appear most generous. So, for example, as I have already said, there are two things universally recognised—recognised as right by every man whose conscience is not absolutely perverted—charity and self-denial. The charity of God, the sacrifice of Christ—these are the two grand, leading principles of the Gospel; and in some form or other you will find these lying at the roots of every profession and state of feeling in almost every age. But the form in which these appear, will vary with all the gradations

which are to be found between the lowest savage state and the highest and most enlightened Christianity.

For example: in ancient Israel the law of love was expounded thus:—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." Among the American Indians and at the Cape, the only homage perchance given to self-denial, was the strange admiration given to that prisoner of war who bore with unflinching fortitude the torture of his country's enemies. In ancient India the same principle was exhibited, but in a more strange and perverted manner. The homage there given to self-denial, self-sacrifice, was this—that the highest form of religion was considered to be that exhibited by the devotee who sat in a tree until the birds had built their nests in his hair—until his nails, like those of the King of Babylon, had grown like birds' talons—until they had grown into his hands—and he became absorbed into the Divinity. We will take another instance, and one better known. In ancient Sparta it was the custom to teach children to steal. And here there would seem to be a contradiction to our proposition—here it would seem as if right and wrong were matters merely conventional; for surely stealing can never be anything but wrong. But if we look deeper we shall see that there is no contradiction here. It was not stealing which was admired; the child was punished if the theft was discovered; but it was the dexterity which was admired, and that because it was a warlike virtue, necessary it may be to a people in continual rivalry with their neighbours. It was not that honesty was despised and dishonesty esteemed, but that honesty and dishonesty were made subordinate to that which appeared to them of higher importance, namely, the duty of concealment. And so we come back to the principle which we laid down at first. In every age, among all nations, the same broad principle remains; but the application of it varies. The conscience may be ill-informed, and in this sense only are right and wrong conventional—varying with latitude and longitude, depending upon chronology and geography.

The principle laid down by the Apostle Paul is this:—

A man will be judged, not by the abstract law of God, not by the rule of absolute right, but much rather by the relative law of conscience. This he states most distinctly—looking at the question on both sides. That which seems to a man to be right is, in a certain sense, right to him; and that which seems to a man to be wrong, in a certain sense *is* wrong to him. For example: he says in his Epistle to the Romans (v. 14) that "sin is not imputed when there is no law," in other words, if a man does not really know a thing to be wrong there is a sense in which, if not right to him, it ceases to be so wrong as it would otherwise be. With respect to the other of these sides, however, the case is still more distinct and plain. Here, in the judgment which the apostle delivers in the parallel chapter of the Epistle to the Romans (the 14th), he says, "I know, and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." In other words, whatever may be the abstract merits of the question—however in God's jurisprudence any particular act may stand—to you, thinking it to be wrong, it manifestly *is* wrong, and your conscience will gather round it a stain of guilt if you do it. In order to understand this more fully, let us take a few instances. There is a difference between *truth* and *veracity*. Veracity—mere veracity—is a small, poor thing. Truth is something greater and higher. Veracity is merely the correspondence between some particular statement and facts—truth is the correspondence between a man's whole soul and reality. It is possible for a man to say that which, unknown to him, is false; and yet he may be true: because if deprived of truth he is deprived of it unwillingly. It is possible, on the other hand, for a man to utter veracities, and yet at the very time that he is uttering those veracities to be false to himself, to his brother, and to his God. One of the most signal instances of this is to be seen in the Book of Job. Most of what Job's friends said to him were veracious statements. Much of what Job said for himself was unveracious and mistaken. And yet those veracities of

theirs were so torn from all connection with fact and truth, that they became falsehoods ; and they were, as has been said, nothing more than "orthodox liars" in the sight of God. On the other hand, Job, blundering perpetually, and falling into false doctrine, was yet a true man—searching for and striving after the truth ; and if deprived of it for a time, deprived of it with all his heart and soul unwillingly. And therefore it was that at last the Lord appeared out of the whirlwind, to confound the men of mere veracity, and to stand by and support the honour of the heartily true.

Let us apply the principle further. It is a matter of less importance that a man should state true views, than that he should state views truly. We will put this in its strongest form. Unitarianism is false—Trinitarianism is true. But yet, in the sight of God, and with respect to a man's eternal destinies hereafter, it would surely be better for him earnestly, honestly, truly, to hold the doctrines of Unitarianism, than in a cowardly or indifferent spirit, or influenced by authority, or from considerations of interest, or for the sake of lucre, to hold the doctrines of Trinitarianism. For instance :—Not many years ago the Church of Scotland was severed into two great divisions, and gave to this age a marvellous proof that there is still amongst us the power of living faith—when five hundred ministers gave up all that earth holds dear—position in the church they had loved ; friendships and affections formed, and consecrated by long fellowship, in its communion ; and almost their hopes of gaining a livelihood—rather than assert a principle which seemed to them to be a false one. Now, my brethren, surely the question in such a case for us to consider is not this, merely—whether of the two sections held the abstract *right*—held the principle in its integrity—but surely far rather, this : who on either side was true to the light within, true to God, true to the truth as God had revealed it to his soul.

Now it is precisely upon this principle that we are enabled to indulge a Christian hope that many of those who

in ancient times were persecutors, for example, may yet be justified at the bar of Christ. Nothing can make persecution right—it is wrong, essentially, eternally wrong in the sight of God. And yet, if a man sincerely and assuredly thinks that Christ has laid upon him a command to persecute with fire and sword, it is surely better that he should, in spite of all feelings of tenderness and compassion, cast aside the dearest affections at the command of his Redeemer, than that he should, in mere laxity and tenderness, turn aside from what seemed to him to be his duty. At least, this appears to be the opinion of the Apostle Paul. He tells us that he was "a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious," that "he did many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," that "being exceedingly mad against the disciples, he persecuted them even unto strange cities." But he tells us further that, "for this cause he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief." Now take a case precisely opposite. In ancient times the Jews did that by which it appeared to them that they would contract defilement and guilt—they spared the lives of the enemies which they had taken in battle. Brethren, the eternal law is, that charity is right, and that law is eternally right which says, "Thou shalt love thine enemy." And had the Jews acted upon this principle they would have done well to spare their enemies: but they did it thinking it to be wrong, transgressing that law which commanded them to slay their idolatrous enemies—not from generosity, but in cupidity—not from charity, but from lax zeal. And so doing, the act was altogether wrong.

II. Such is the apostle's exposition of the law of Christian conscience. Let us now, in the second place, consider the applications both of a personal and of a public nature, which arise out of it.

1. The first application is a personal one. It is this:—Do what *seems* to *you* to be right: it is only so that you will at last learn by the grace of God to see clearly what *is* right. A man thinks with n himself that it is God's law and God's

will that he should act thus and thus. There is nothing possible for us to say—there is no advice for us to give, but this—"You *must* so act." He is responsible for the opinions he holds, and still more for the way in which he arrived at them—whether in a slothful and selfish, or in an honest and truth-seeking manner; but being now his soul's convictions, you can give no other law than this—"You must obey your conscience." For no man's conscience gets so seared by doing what is wrong unknowingly, as by doing that which appears to be wrong to his conscience. The Jews' consciences did not get seared by their slaying the Canaanites, but they did become seared by their failing to do what appeared to them to be right. Therefore, woe to you if you do what others think right, instead of obeying the dictates of your own conscience; woe to you if you allow authority, or prescription, or fashion, or influence, or any other human thing, to interfere with that awful and sacred thing—responsibility. "Every man," said the apostle, "must give an account of himself to God."

2. The second application of this principle has reference to others. No doubt to the large, free, enlightened mind of the Apostle Paul, all these scruples and superstitions must have seemed mean, trivial, and small indeed. It was a matter to him of far less importance that truth should be *established* than that it should be arrived at truly—a matter of far less importance, even, that right should be done, than that right should be done rightly. Conscience was far more sacred to him than even liberty—it was to him a prerogative far more precious to assert the rights of Christian conscience, than to magnify the privileges of Christian liberty. The scruple may be small and foolish, but it may be impossible to uproot the scruple without tearing up the feeling of the sanctity of conscience, and of reverence to the law of God, associated with this scruple. And therefore the Apostle Paul counsels these men to abridge their Christian liberty, and not to eat of those things which had been sacrificed to idols, but to have compassion upon the scruples of their weaker brethren. And this, for two reasons. The first of

these is a mere reason of Christian feeling. It might cause exquisite pain to sensitive minds to see those things which appeared to them to be wrong, done by Christian brethren. Now, you may take a parallel case. It may be, if you will, mere superstition to bow at the name of Jesus. It may be, and no doubt is, founded upon a mistaken interpretation of that passage in the Epistle to the Philippians (ii. 10), which says that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." But there are many congregations in which this has been the long-established rule, and there are many Christians who would feel pained to see such a practice discontinued—as if it implied a declension from the reverence due to "that name which is above every name." Now, what in this case is the Christian duty? Is it this—to stand upon our Christian liberty? Or is it not rather this—to comply with a prejudice which is manifestly a harmless one, rather than give pain to a Christian brother? Take another case. It may be a mistaken scruple; but there is no doubt that it causes much pain to many Christians to see a carriage used on the Lord's day. But you, with higher views of the spirit of Christianity, who know that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"—who can enter more deeply into the truth taught by our blessed Lord, that every day is to be dedicated to Him and consecrated to His service—upon the high principle of Christian liberty you can use your carriage—you can exercise your liberty. But if there are Christian brethren to whom this would give pain—then I humbly ask you, but most earnestly—What is the duty here? Is it not this—to abridge your Christian liberty—and to go through rain, and mud, and snow, rather than give pain to one Christian conscience? To give one more instance. The words, and garb, and customs of that sect of Christians called Quakers may be formal enough; founded, no doubt, as in the former case, upon a mistaken interpretation of a passage in the Bible. But they are at least harmless; and have long been associated with the simplicity, and benevolence, and Christian humbleness of this body of Christians—the followers of one

who, three hundred years ago, set out upon the glorious enterprise of making all men friends. Now, would it be Christian, or would it not rather be something more than unchristian—would it not be gross rudeness and coarse unfeelingness to treat such words, and habits, and customs, with anything but respect and reverence?

Further: the apostle enjoined this duty upon the Corinthian converts, of abridging their Christian liberty, not merely because it might give pain to indulge it, but also because it might even lead their brethren into sin. For, if any man should eat of the flesh offered to an idol, feeling himself justified by his conscience, it were well: but if any man, overborne by authority or interest, were to do this, not according to conscience, but against it, there would be a distinct and direct act of disobedience—a conflict between his sense of right and the gratification of his appetites, or the power of influence; and then his compliance would as much damage his conscience and moral sense as if the act had been wrong in itself.

Now, in the personal application of these remarks, there are three things which we have to say. The first is this:—Distinguish, I pray you, between this tenderness for a brother's conscience and mere time-serving. This same apostle whom we here see so gracefully giving way upon the ground of expediency when Christian principles were left entire, was the same who stood firm and strong as a rock when anything was demanded which trenched upon Christian principle. When some required, as a matter of necessity for salvation, that these converts should be circumcised, the apostle says—"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour!" It was not indifference—it was not cowardice—it was not the mere love of peace, purchased by the sacrifice of principle, that prompted this counsel—but it was Christian love—that delicate and Christian love which dreads to tamper with the sanctities of a brother's conscience.

2. The second thing we have to say is this—that this abridgement of their liberty is a duty more especially incum-

bent upon all who are possessed of influence. There are some men, happily for themselves we may say, who are so insignificant that they can take their course quietly in the valleys of life, and who can exercise the fullest Christian liberty without giving pain to others. But it is the price which all who are possessed of influence must pay—that their acts must be measured, not in themselves, but according to their influence on others. So, my Christian brethren, to bring this matter home to every-day experience and common life, if the landlord uses his authority and influence to induce his tenant to vote against his conscience, it may be he has secured one voice to the principle which is right, or, at all events, to that which seemed to him to be right: but he has gained that single voice at the sacrifice and expense of a brother's soul. Or, again—if for the sake of ensuring personal politeness and attention, the rich man puts a gratuity into the hand of a servant of some company which has forbidden him to receive it, he gains the attention, he ensures the politeness, but he gains it at the sacrifice and expense of a man and a Christian brother.

3. The last remark which we have to make is this:—How possible it is to mix together the vigour of a masculine and manly intellect with the tenderness and charity which is taught by the gospel of Christ! No man ever breathed so freely when on earth the air and atmosphere of heaven as the Apostle Paul—no man ever soared so high above all prejudices, narrowness, littlenesses, scruples, as he: and yet no man ever bound himself as Paul bound himself to the ignorance, the scruples, the prejudices of his brethren. So that what in other cases was infirmity, imbecility, and superstition, gathered round it in his case the pure high spirit of Christian charity and Christian delicacy. And now, out of the writings, and sayings, and deeds of those who loudly proclaim the "rights of man" and the "rights of liberty," match us if you can with one sentence so sublime, so noble, one that will so stand at the bar of God hereafter, as this single, glorious sentence of his, in

which he asserts the rights of Christian conscience above the claims of Christian liberty—"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

THE LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL USE OF LAW

(A FRAGMENT)

1 TIMOTHY i. 8.—"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."

IT is scarcely ever possible to understand a passage without some acquaintance with the history of the circumstances under which it was written.

At Ephesus, over which Timothy was bishop, people had been bewildered by the teaching of converted Jews, who mixed the old leaven of Judaism with the new spirituality of Christianity. They maintained the perpetual obligation of the Jewish law (v. 7). They desired to be teachers of the law. They required strict performance of a number of severe observances. They talked mysteriously of angels and powers intermediate between God and the human soul (v. 4). The result was an interminable discussion at Ephesus. The Church was filled with disputations and controversies.

Now there is something always refreshing to see the Apostle Paul descending upon an arena of controversy, where minds have been bewildered; and so much is to be said on both sides, that people are uncertain which to take. You know at once that he will pour light upon the question, and illuminate all dark corners. You know that he will not trim, and balance, and hang doubtful, or become a partisan; but that he will seize some great principle which

lies at the root of the whole controversy, and make its true bearings clear at once.

This he always does, and this he does on the present occasion (v. 5 and 6). He does not, like a vehement polemic, say Jewish ceremonies and rules are all worthless, nor some ceremonies are worthless, and others essential; but he says, the root of the whole matter is charity. If you turn aside from this, all is lost; here at once the controversy closes. So far as any rule fosters the spirit of love, that is, is used lawfully, it is wise, and has a use. So far as it does not, it is chaff. So far as it hinders it, it is poison.

Now observe how different this method is from that which is called the sober, moderate way—the *via media*. Some would have said, the great thing is to avoid extremes. If the question respects fasting—fast—only in *moderation*. If the observance of the Sabbath day, observe it on the Jewish principle, only *not so strictly*.

Paul, on the contrary, went down to the root; he said, the true question is not whether the law is good or bad, but on what principle; he said, you are both wrong—*you*, in saying that the observance of the law is essential, for the end of it is charity, and if *that* be got what matter *how—you*, in saying rules may be dispensed with entirely and always, "for we know that the law is good."

I. The unlawful use.
II. The lawful use of law.

I. The unlawful use.

Define law.—By law, Paul almost always means not the Mosaic law, but law in its essence and principle, that is, constraint. This chiefly in two forms expresses itself—1st, a custom; 2nd, a maxim. As examples of custom, we might give Circumcision, or the Sabbath, or Sacrifice, or Fasting.

Law said, thou shalt *do* these things; and law, as mere law, constrained them. Or again, law may express itself in maxims and rules.

In rules, as when law said, "Thou shalt not steal"—not saying a word about secret dishonesty of heart, but simply taking cognisance of *acts*.

In maxims, as when it admonished that man ought to give a tenth to God, leaving the principle of the matter untouched. Principle is one thing, and maxim is another. A principle requires liberality, a maxim says one-tenth. A principle says, "A merciful man is merciful to his beast," leaves mercy to the heart, and does not define how; a maxim says, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out thy corn. A principle says, Forgive; a maxim defines "seven times;" and thus the whole law falls into two divisions.

The ceremonial law, which constrains life by customs.

The moral law, which guides life by rules and maxims.

Now it is an illegitimate use of law. First. To expect by obedience to it to make out a title to salvation.

By the deeds of the law, shall no man living be justified. Salvation is by faith: a state of heart right with God; faith is the spring of holiness—a well of life. Salvation is not the having committed a certain number of good acts. Destruction is not the having committed a certain number of crimes. Salvation is God's Spirit in us, leading to good. Destruction is the selfish spirit in us, leading to wrong.

For a plain reason then, obedience to law cannot save, because it is merely the performance of a certain number of acts, which may be done by habit, from fear, from compulsion. Obedience remains still imperfect. A man may have obeyed the rule, and kept the maxim, and yet not be perfect. "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up." "Yet lackest thou one thing." The law he had kept. The spirit of obedience in its high form of sacrifice he had not.

Secondly. To use it superstitiously.

It is plain that this was the use made of it by the Ephesian teachers (v. 4). It seemed to them that *law* was pleasing to God as restraint. Then unnatural restraints came to be imposed—on the appetites, fasting; on the

affections, celibacy. This is what Paul condemns (ch. iv., v. 8). "Bodily exercise profiteth little."

And again, this superstition showed itself in a false reverence—wondrous stories respecting angels—respecting the eternal genealogy of Christ—awful thoughts about spirits. The apostle calls all these, very unceremoniously, "endless genealogies" (v. 4), and "old wives' fables" (ch. iv., v. 7).

The question at issue is, wherein true reverence consists: according to them, in the multiplicity of the objects of reverence; according to St. Paul, in the character of the object revered. . . . God and Right the true object.

But you are not a whit the better for solemn and reverential feelings about a mysterious, invisible world. To tremble before a consecrated wafer is spurious reverence. To bend before the Majesty of Right is Christian reverence.

Thirdly. To use it as if the letter of it were sacred. The law commanded none to eat the shewbread except the priests. David ate it in hunger. If Abimelech had scrupled to give it, he would have used the law unlawfully.

The law commanded no manner of work. The apostles in hunger rubbed the ears of corn. The Pharisees used the law unlawfully, in forbidding that.

II. The lawful use of law.

1. As a restraint to keep outward evil in check . . . "The law was made for sinners and profane." . . . Illustrate this by reference to capital punishment. No sane man believes that punishment by death will make a nation's heart right, or that the sight of an execution can soften or ameliorate. Punishment does not work in that way. It is not meant for that purpose. It is meant to guard society.

The law commanding a blasphemer to be stoned, could not teach one Israelite love to God, but it could save the streets of Israel from scandalous ribaldry.

And therefore clearly understand, law is a mere check to bad men: it does not improve them; it often makes them

worse; it cannot sanctify them. God never intended that it should. It saves society from the open transgression; it does not contemplate the amelioration of the offender.

Hence we see for what reason the apostle insisted on the use of the law for Christians. Law never can be abrogated. Strict rules are needed exactly in proportion as we want the power or the will to rule ourselves. It is not because the Gospel has come that we are free from the law, but because, and only so far, as we are in a Gospel state. "It is for a righteous man" that the law is not made, and thus we see the true nature of Christian liberty. The liberty to which we are called in Christ, is not the liberty of devils, the liberty of doing what we will, but the blessed liberty of being on the side of the law, and therefore unrestrained by it in doing right.

Illustrate from laws of coining, housebreaking, &c. We are not under them.—Because we may break them as we like? Nay—the moment we desire, the law is alive again to us.

2. As a primer is used by a child to acquire by degrees, principles and a spirit.

This is the use attributed to it in verse 5. "The end of the commandment is charity."

Compare with this, two other passages—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness," and "love is the fulfilling of the law." "Perfect love casteth out fear."

In every law there is a spirit; in every maxim a principle; and the law and the maxim are laid down for the sake of conserving the spirit and the principle which they enshrine.

Paul compares God's dealing with man to a wise parent's instruction of his child.—See the Epistle to the Galatians. Boyhood is under law; you appeal not to the boy's reason, but his will, by rewards and punishments: Do this, and I will reward you; do it not, and you will be punished. So long as under law, salutary and necessary, but only while under law. He is free when he discerns principles, and at the same time has got, by habit, the

will to obey. So that rules have done for him a double work, taught him the principle, and facilitated obedience to it.

Distinguish however.—In point of time, law is first—in point of importance, the Spirit.

In point of *time*, Charity is the "end" of the commandment—in point of *importance*, first and foremost.

The first thing a boy has to do, is to learn implicit obedience to rules. The first thing in importance for a man to learn is, to sever himself from maxims, rules, laws. Why? That he may become an Antinomian, or a Latitudinarian? No. He is severed from submission to the *maxim* because he has got allegiance to the *principle*. He is free from the rule and the law because he has got the Spirit written in his heart.

This is the Gospel. A man is redeemed by Christ so far as he is not under the law; he is free from the law so far as he is free from the evil which the law restrains; he progresses so far as there is no evil in him which it is an effort to keep down; and perfect salvation and liberty are —when we,—who though having the first fruits of the Spirit, yet groan within ourselves, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"—shall have been freed in body, soul, and spirit, from the last traces of the evil which can only be kept down by force. In other words, so far as Christ's statement is true of *us*, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

THE WORD AND THE WORLD

ACTS xix. 1, 2.—"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,—He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," &c.

WE consider to-day the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, but first we must make some preliminary remarks.

The second missionary journey of St. Paul was done, and he had left Europe for Asia. The object of his travel was threefold. 1. To complete in the temple of Jerusalem the vow which he had begun at Corinth (xviii. 18, 21). 2. To visit Antioch, the mother church of Gentile Christianity, where his presence was much needed (xviii. 22). 3. To revisit the churches of Galatia, and strengthen those who had been tempted by false teaching in his absence (xviii. 23).

The two last of these objects were connected with one single point of interest. It was the Jewish controversy, which was then at its height. The council of Jerusalem had decided that a Gentile was not dependent for salvation on the Jewish law (xv. 23–29). But another question remained still open: Was a Christian who did not obey the law, on the same level as a Christian who did obey it? Was it not a superior religious standing-ground, to add the ritual life to the life of faith?

With this question the whole of the Epistle to the Galatians is occupied. That Epistle does not deal with the question, whether the ritual law is necessary for salvation; but with this—whether a Gentile Christian became a higher man than before by a ceremonial life: whether, in St. Paul's words, "having begun in the spirit," he could be "made perfect through the flesh."

At Antioch that question assumed a practical form. The Jewish and Gentile Christians had lived in harmony, until certain zealous ritualists came from Jerusalem, where St. James presided. Then a severance took place. The Law-observing disciples admitted these new converts to be Christians, but would not admit their standing in the Church to be equal to their own. They denied their complete brotherhood. They refused to eat with them. A Christian, not observing the ceremonial law, was to a Christian who did observe it, very much what a proselyte of the gate was to an ancient Jew.

Two men of leading station yielded to this prejudice though it was destructive of the very essence of Christianity. These were St. Peter and Barnabas. The "dissimulation," as St. Paul calls it, of these two apostles suggests two instructive lessons.

The yielding of Barnabas reminds us of the insecurity of mere feeling. Barnabas was a man of feeling and fine sensibilities. He could not bear to have his relative, Mark, severely judged (Acts xv. 36–39, and Col. iv. 10). It pained him to the heart to see that Paul, when he first essayed to join himself to his disciples, was misunderstood (Acts ix. 26, 27). He was a "Son of Consolation." He sold his property to distribute to the Christian poor (Acts iv. 36, 37). He healed many a broken heart. But he wanted just that firmness which men of feeling so often want—the power of standing steadily by a principle.

The unsteadiness of St. Peter exhibits a different truth. It tells that a fall, however it may qualify a man for giving advice to others similarly tempted, does not qualify for future consistency, nor for the power of showing mercy in the highest way. No doubt St. Peter's fall, after his conversion, peculiarly fitted him for strengthening his brethren. But sin weakens the power of resistance. He who yields once will more easily yield the second time. He who shrunk from standing by his Master found it fearfully easy to shrink from abiding by a principle. Sin indulged breaks down the barriers between good and evil, and turns strength

into weakness! And failure does not make men merciful to others. St. Peter is just as hard to the Gentile Christians, expelling them from Christian society for that which he knew to be indifferent, as if he had always been firm in his own integrity. He only can judge of error and show mercy, who has been "tempted, yet without sin."

This nineteenth chapter is divisible into three chief subjects:—

I. The baptism of John's disciples.
II. The burning of the "Ephesian letters."
III. The tumult occasioned by the worshippers of Diana.

I. When St. Paul came to Ephesus, he found twelve disciples of John, bearing the name of Christians, but having a very imperfect form of Christianity. Now the baptism of John, which was all these men knew, means the doctrine of John—that cycle of teaching which is briefly symbolized by the chief ritual act of the system. The system of John was contained in a very narrow range of truth. It was such truth as we might have expected from a man who had been so disciplined. It was John's lot to be born into the world in a period of highly-advanced society; and in that hot-bed of life-fictions, Jerusalem, the ardent mind of the young man found nothing to satisfy the cravings of its desire. He wanted something deeper and truer than the existing systems could afford him. He went to the Sadducee and the Pharisee in vain. He found no life in the Jewish ritual—no assistance from the Rabbis. He went into the wilderness to commune with God, to try what was to be learned from Him by a soul in earnest, without church, ministers, or ordinances. The heavens spoke to him of purity, and the river by his side of God's eternity. Locusts and honey, his only food, taught him that man has a higher life to nourish than that which is sustained by epicurean luxuries. So disciplined, John came back to his countrymen. As might be expected, no elaborate theology formed any part of his teaching. "We want a simpler,

purer, austerer life. Let men be real. Fruits worthy of repentance — fruits, fruits, not profession. A new life. Repent." That was the burden of John's message.

A preparatory one evidently, one most incomplete in itself. It implied the need of something additional, as St. Paul told these converts. "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." And none felt more distinctly than John that his was merely an initial work. That was a touching acknowledgment of the subordinate part he had to perform in the construction of the World's new life. "He must increase, but I must decrease." The work of John was simply the work of the axe. "The axe is laid to the root of the trees;" to destroy, not to build; to cut up by the roots ancient falsehoods; to tear away all that was unreal; to make a clearance that the light of day might come in. A great work, but still not the greatest.

And herein lay the difference between the two baptisms. John baptized with water, Christ with the Holy Ghost and fire. The one was simply the washing away of a false and evil past; the other was the gift of the power to lead a pure, true life.

This was all that these disciples knew; yet, remark, they are reckoned as Christians. They are called "certain disciples"—that is, of Jesus. They knew little enough of Christianity; they had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Trinity they knew not, nor that of Sanctification, nor probably that of the Atonement. And yet in the Word of God they are called disciples of Christ.

Let us learn from that a judgment of charity. Let not the religious man be too prone to talk with contempt of a legal spirit. Let him not sneer at "merely moral men." Morality is not religion, but it is the best soil on which religion grows. He who lives an honest, sincere, honourable life, and has strong perceptions of moral right and moral wrong, may not have reached the highest stages of

spirituality; he may "know only the baptism of John;" he may aim as yet at nothing higher than doing his duty well, "accusing no man falsely, being content with his wages," giving one coat out of two to the poor; and yet that man, with scanty theology and small spiritual experience, may be a real "disciple" in the school of Christ, and one of the children of the Highest.

Nay, it is the want of this preparation which so often makes religion a sickly plant in the soul. Men begin with abundance of spiritual knowledge; they understand well the "scheme of salvation;" they talk of religious privilege, and have much religious liberty; they despise the formal spirit and the legal spirit. But if the foundation has not been laid deep in a perception of the eternal difference between right and wrong, the superstructure will be but flimsy. I believe it is a matter of no small importance that the baptism of John should precede the baptism of Christ; that is, that a strict life, scrupulous regularity, abhorrence of evil—perhaps even something too austere, the usual accompaniment of sincerity at the outset—should go before the peace which comes of faith in Christ. First the blade, *then* the ear, then the full corn in the ear. You cannot have the harvest first. There is an order in the development of the soul as there is in the development of the year of nature, and it is not safe to *force*. Nearly two thousand years were spent in the Divine government in teaching the Jews the meaning of holiness, the separation of right from wrong. And such must be the order of the education of children and of men. The baptism of Repentance before the baptism of the Spirit.

The result which followed this baptism was the gifts of tongues and prophecy. On a former occasion I endeavoured to explain what is meant by the gift of tongues. It appeared then that "tongues" were not so much the power of speaking various languages, as the power of speaking spiritual truths with supernatural and heavenly fervour. This passage favours that interpretation. The apostle was there with twelve new converts. To what purpose was the

supposed use of various languages among such a number, who already understood one another? It would seem more like the showing off of a new accomplishment than the humble character of Christian modesty permits. If this gift simply made them linguists, then the miracle was of a temporary and earthly character. But if it consisted in elevating their spiritual intuitions, and enabling them to speak, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual," then you have a miracle celestial indeed, worthy of its Spirit-Author. If it were only a gift of languages, then the miracle has nothing to do with us; but if it were the elevating of the natural faculties by God's Spirit to a higher and diviner use, then we have a marvel and a truth which belongs to all ages. The Life is the light of men. Give life, and light follows. Expand the heart, and you enlarge the intellect. Touch the soul with love, and then you touch the lips with hallowed fire, and make even the stammering tongue speak the words of living eloquence.

This was the gift of tongues that followed the reception of the Divine spirit.

II. The second subject in the chapter is the burning of the "Ephesian letters."

Ephesus was the metropolis of Asia. Its most remarkable feature was the Temple of Diana—one of the wonders of the world. It contained a certain image, misshapen, of a human form, reported by tradition to have fallen from the skies; perhaps one of those meteoric stones, which, generated in the atmosphere, and falling to the ground, are reckoned by the vulgar to be thunderbolts from heaven.

This image represented Nature, the prolific nurse and source of all life, and the worship was a worship of Nature. Upon the base of the statue were certain mysterious sentences, and these, copied and written upon papers and amulets, were known far and wide by the name of "Ephe-

sian letters." This was the heathen form of magical superstition. But it seems there was a Jewish practice of the occult art besides. They used certain incantations, herbs, and magical formulas, said by tradition to have been taught by Solomon, for the expulsion of diseases and the exorcism of evil spirits.

The state of Ephesus, like that of Corinth and Athens, was one of metropolitan civilization; and it is nothing strange that in such a stage of social existence, arts and beliefs like these should flourish. For there is always a craving in the soul of man for something supernatural, an irrepressible desire for communion with the unseen world. And where an over-refined civilization has choked up the natural and healthy outlets of this feeling, it will inevitably find an unnatural one. The restless spirit of those times, dissatisfied with their present existence, in spite of itself feeling the degradation of the life of epicurean indolence and selfishness, instinctively turned to the other world in quest of marvels. We do not wonder to find atheism and abject superstition co-tenants of the same town or the same mind. We do not marvel that in the very city where reasonable Christianity could scarcely find a footing, a mob could be found screaming for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians;" that when men had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," wise men and men in authority should be believers in "the image which fell down from Jupiter." Ephesus was exactly the place where Jewish charlatans and the vendors of "Ephesian letters" could reap a rich harvest from the credulity of sceptical voluptuaries.

It is difficult to know what to say about this Oriental magic. Shall we say that it was all imposture? or account for its success by the power of a highly-excited imagination? or believe that they were really making use of some unknown powers of nature, which they themselves in ignorance supposed to be supernatural? Little can now be decided. That the magicians themselves believed in their own art is plain, from the fact of the existence of these costly

"Ephesian letters" and scientific "curious books," which had apparently reached the dignity of an elaborate system; and also from the fact that some of them, as the seven sons of Sceva, believed in Christianity as a higher kind of magic, and attempted to use its formula, as more efficacious than their own. "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." Had they been only impostors, they would have taken Paul for an impostor too.

Here was one of those early attempts, which in after ages became so successful, to amalgamate Christianity with the magical doctrines. Gnosticism was the result in the East, Romanism the result in the West.

But the spirit of Christianity brooks no amalgamation. The essence of magic consists in this: the belief that by some external act,—not connected with moral goodness, nor making a man wiser or better,—communication can be ensured with the Spiritual World; and the tutelage of God or some superior spirit be commanded for a mortal. It matters not whether this be attempted by Ephesian letters, amulets, charms, curious books,—or by Sacraments, or by Church ordinances or Priestly powers,—whatever professes to bring God near to man, except by making man more like to God, is of the same spirit of Antichrist.

The spirit world of God has its laws, and they are unalterable. They are such as these: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Blessed are the merciful—the peacemakers—the meek—the poor in spirit." "If any man will do His will, he shall know." "If a man love Me he will keep my words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is Christianity. There is no way of becoming a partaker of "the powers of the world to come," except by having the heart right with God. God's presence, God's protection, is the privilege of the humble, the holy, the loving. These are the laws of the kingdom of God's Spirit, and no magic can reverse them. The contest was brought to an issue by the signal failure of these magicians to work a miracle—the man possessed

leaped upon the exorcisers, and they fled wounded, upon which there was great consternation in Ephesus. The possessors of curious books came, confessed their guilt, and burnt them with their own hands in the apostle's presence.

You will observe in all this the terrible supremacy of conscience. There was struck a chord deep in the moral nature of these men, and it vibrated in torture. They could not bear their own secret, and they had no remedy but immediate confession. It is this arraigning accuser within the bosom, that compels the peculator, after years of concealed theft, to send back the stolen money to his employer, with the acknowledgment that he has suffered years of misery. It was this that made Judas dash down his gold in the Temple, and go and hang himself. It is this that again and again has forced the murderer from his unsuspected security in social life, to deliver himself up to justice, and to choose a true death rather than the dreadful secret of a false life. Observe how mightily our moral nature works —for health and peace, if there be no obstruction; but for disease and torture, if it be perverted. But, anyhow it works, and with living, indestructible force, as the juices of vigorous life, if obstructed, create and feed gigantic disease.

Consider, in the next place, the test of sincerity furnished by this act of burning the Ephesian letters. First of all it was a costly sacrifice. They were valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver. In those days, copies were not multiplied by printing; and the possessor of a secret would take care not to multiply it. Rarity created costliness. The possession of one such book was the possession of a fortune. Then again, there was the sacrifice of livelihood. By these books they got their living. And a man who had lived to thirty or forty years of age in this mode of life was not young enough to begin the world again with a new profession. It was to throw themselves almost into beggary. Moreover, it was the destruction of much knowledge that was really valuable. As in the pursuit of alchemy real

chemical secrets were discovered, so it cannot be doubted that these curious manuscripts contained many valuable natural facts. To burn them was to waste all these—to give the lore accumulated for years to the winds.

Once more, it was an outrage to feeling. Costly manuscripts, written with curious art, many of them probably the heirlooms of a family, many which were associated with a vast variety of passages in life, old feelings, old teachers, and companions, these were to be committed mercilessly to the flames. Remember, too, how many other ways there were of disposing of them. Might they not be sold, and the proceeds "given to the poor?" Might they not at least be made over to some relative who, not feeling anything wrong in the use or possession of them, would not have his conscience aggrieved? Or might they not be retained, the use of them being given up, as curious records of the past, as the treasure stores of so much that was beautiful and wise?

And then Conscience arose with her stern, clear voice. They are the records of an ignorant and guilty past. There must be no false tenderness; the sacrifice must be real, or it is none. To the flames with them, till their ashes are strewed upon the winds, and the smoke will rise up to heaven a sweet savour before God.

Whoever has made such a sacrifice as this—and every real Christian in the congregation in some shape or other has—will remember the strange medley of feeling which accompanied the sacrifice. We should err if we expected such a deed to be done with feelings entirely single. There is a mixture in all such sacrifices. Partly fear constrained the act, produced by the judgment on the other exorcists; partly genuine remorse; partly there was a lingering regret as leaf after leaf perished in the flames; partly a feeling of relief, and partly a heavy sense of loss in remembering that the work of years was obliterated, and that the past had to be lived afresh as a time wasted; partly shame, and partly a wild tumult of joy, at the burst of new hope, and the prospect of a nobler life. We cannot, and dare not, too closely scan such things. The sacrifice was made, and He

who knows the mixture of the earthly and the spiritual in His creatures' hearts doubtless accepted the sacrifice.

There is no Christian life that has not in it sacrifice, and that alone is the sacrifice which is made in the spirit of the conflagration of the "Ephesian letters," without reserve, without hesitation, without insincere tenderness. If the slaveholder, convinced of the iniquity of the traffic in man, sells the slaves on his estate to the neighbouring planter, the mark of sincerity is wanting; or if the trader in opium or in spirits quits his nefarious commerce, but first secures the value of all that remains in his warehouse or in his ships, again there is a something which betokens the want of a heart true and honest; or if the possessor of a library becomes convinced that certain volumes are unfit for his shelves, immoral, polluting the mind of him that reads them, and yet cannot sacrifice the brilliant binding and the costly edition without an equivalent, what shall we say of these men's sincerity?

Two things marked these Ephesians' earnestness—the voluntariness of their confession, and the unreserved destruction of these records and means of evil. And I say to you, if there be a man here before me with a sin upon his heart, let him remember Conscience *will* arise to do her dreadful work at last. It may be when it is too late. Acknowledgment at once, this is all that remains for him to relieve his heart of its intolerable load. If he has wronged a man, let him acknowledge it, and ask forgiveness; if he has defrauded him of his due, or kept from him his rights, let him repair, restore, make up; or, if the guilt be one with which man intermeddleth not, and of which God alone takes cognizance, on his bended knees this night, and before the sun of to-morrow dawn, let him pour out the secret of his heart, or else, it may be, that in this world, and in the world to come, Peace is exiled from his heart for ever.

III. We shall consider, thirdly, the sedition respecting Diana's worship. First under this head let us notice the speech of Demetrius—in which observe:

1. The cause of the slow death which error and falsehood die: shot through and through they still linger on. Existing abuses in Church and State are upheld because they are intertwined with private interests. The general good is impeded by private cupidity. The welfare of a nation, the establishment of a grand principle, is clamoured against because destructive of the monopoly of a few particular trades. The salvation of the world must be arrested that Demetrius may continue to sell shrines of Diana. This is the reason why it takes centuries to overthrow an evil, after it has proved an evil.

2. The mixture of religious and selfish feelings. Not only "our craft," but also the worship of the great goddess Diana. Demetrius was, or thought himself sincere; a man really zealous for the interests of religion. And so it is with many a patriotic and religious cry. "My country"—"my church"—"my religion"—it supports *me*. "By this craft we have our wealth."

3. Numbers are no test of truth. What Demetrius said, and the town-clerk corroborated, was a fact—that the whole world worshipped the great goddess Diana. Antiquity, universality, popularity, were all on her side; on the other, there were only Paul, Gaius, Aristarchus. If numbers tested truth, Apollos in the last chapter need not have become the brilliant outcast from the schools of Alexandria, nor St. Paul stand in Ephesus in danger of his life.

He who seeks Truth must be content with a lonely, little-trodden path. If he cannot worship her till she has been canonized by the shouts of the multitude, he must take his place with the members of that wretched crowd who shouted for two long hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," till truth, reason, and calmness, were all drowned in noise.

Let us notice the judicious speech of the town-clerk, or chamberlain more properly, in which observe—

1. The impression made by the apostle on the wiser and calmer part of the community. The Asiarchs, or magistrates, were his friends. The town-clerk exculpated

him, as Gallio had done at Corinth. Herein we see the power of consistency.

2. The admitted moral blamelessness of the Christians. Paul had not "blasphemed" the goddess. As at Athens he had not begun by attacking errors, or prejudices, or even superstitions. He preached Truth, and its effect began to be felt already, in the decline of the trade which flourished by the sale of silver models of the wondrous Temple—a statistical fact, evidencing the amount of success. Overcome evil by good, error by truth. Christianity—opposed by the force of governments, counterfeited by charlatanism, sneered at by philosophers, cried down by frantic mobs, coldly looked at from a distance by the philosophical, pursued with unrelenting hatred by Judaism, met by unions and combinations of trades, having arrayed against it every bad passion of humanity—went swiftly on, conquering and to conquer.

The continental philosophers tell us that Christianity is effete. Let this narrative determine. Is *that* the history of a Principle which has in it the seeds of death? Comes *that* from the invention of a transient thought of man's, or from the Spirit of the Everlasting ages?

A THANKSGIVING DAY

JOHN v. 14, 15.—"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.—The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole."

THE man to whom these words were spoken, had been lying only a few days before, a helpless, hopeless sufferer among the porches of Bethesda, together with a number of others affected in a similar manner. By a singular, unexpected, and miraculous event, he was rescued from his

calamity, while the remainder were left to the mercies of public charity, or to avail themselves of the mysterious spring of Bethesda.

It was a time of festival in Jerusalem, the streets were probably echoing with the voice of mirth and festivity, with the sounds of them that kept holiday: but it was to this congregation of the sick and the miserable that the Redeemer bent his steps; it was what might have been expected from the Son of Man—"The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It was the office of the Man of Sorrows to soothe the wretched; and of all the crowded scenes that day enacting in the Holy City, the "great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered," found that their abode was the most congenial atmosphere to the soul of the Redeemer.

And in all this we have but a miniature representation of the world as it is now. Jerusalem contained within its walls, within its proud battlements, and amidst its stately temples, as much wretchedness and as much misery, separated only by a thin partition from its abodes of luxury and state, as our own metropolis does now. It is a miniature representation of the world in this, so full of outward show and of inward wretchedness. It is a representation of the world we live in, inasmuch as it is a place where selfishness prevails; for there was affixed a certain condition to the healing of the spring, that the man should be the first; if he were not the first, no miracle took place, and there was one more friendless wretch. This man had no one to give him the little assistance required. For thirty-eight years he had been lingering here, and there appeared to have been no visitor who would supply what was wanting of the ties of blood or relationship. It is, I say, but a representation of what this world is, when the love of God has not touched the heart of man. It is a representation of the world too, in this, that with suffering there is frequently appointed the remedy. The remedy is often found side by side with the pain it may relieve, if we could but make use of it. It is so in both bodily and

spiritual maladies—there is a remedial system, a pool of Bethesda, everywhere springing up by the side of sin and suffering.

It is a representation of the world, also, that the presence of the Son of Man should be felt rather in scenes of sorrow than of joy. It is not in the day of high health and strength, when our intellect is powerful, our memory vigorous, when we feel strong in our integrity and our courage, but when our weakened powers have made us feel that we are "a worm and no man;" when our failing faculties convince us that, except for our connection with immortality, our minds would be as nothing; when we feel temptation getting too strong for us, and that we are on the brink of falling—then it is that we are taught there is a strength not our own, beyond anything that we possess of our own. It is then that the presence of the Son of Man is felt; then is the day of our merciful and mysterious deliverance. And there is another resemblance to be noted. The Saviour of the world went into the Bethesda porches, and out of the great number of sufferers He selected one—not because of his superior righteousness, not for any merit on his part, but for reasons hidden within His own Almighty Mind. So it is in the world—one is taken, another is left; one nation is sterile, another is fertile; one is full of diseases from which another is exempted; one man is surrounded with luxuries and comforts, another with every suffering which flesh is heir to. So much for the miniature of the world exhibited by the Pool of Bethesda.

Now in connection with this subject there are two branches in which we will arrange our observations.

I. The cause of this man's disease.
II. The history of his gratitude.

I. Concerning the cause of his disease, we are not left in any doubt, the Redeemer's own lips have told us what it was—"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." So we see there was a strange connection between this

bodily malady and moral evil, a connection that would have startled all around if it had been seen. No doubt the men of science, versed in the healing art, would have found some cause for his malady connected with the constitution of his bodily frame; but the Redeemer went beyond all this. Thirty-eight years before, there had been some sin committed, possibly a small sin, in our eyes at least, of which the result had been thirty-eight years of suffering; and so the truth we gather from this is, there is a connection between physical and moral evil; a connection, my Christian brethren, more deep than any of us have been accustomed to believe in.

But, most assuredly, many of the most painful forms of disease that come upon the body depend upon the nervous constitution; and the nervous system is connected inseparably with the moral state more than men suppose; often where we have been disposed to refer the whole to external causes, there has been something of moral disorder in the character which makes that constitution exquisitely susceptible of suffering, and incapable of enjoyment. Every physician will tell us that indulged passions will lead to a disturbed state of body; that want of self-control in various ways will end in that wretched state when the light that falls on the eye inflicts torture, the sounds that are heard in the ear are all discord, and all this beautiful creation, so formed for delight, will only minister to the sufferings of the diseased and disorganized frame. Thus we see that external suffering is often connected with moral evil, but we must carefully guard and modify this statement, for this is not universally the case; and it is clear this was the Saviour's opinion, for when the disciples came to Him asking whether the blind man or his parents did sin, He answered that neither had sinned, plainly showing that there was sometimes physical suffering for which there was no moral cause. It was not for his own sin, or even that of others—it baffled all the investigations of man to explain it.

Now, we must remember this when we see cases of

bodily suffering: we must consider that there is a great difference between the two senses in which the word punishment is used. It may be a penalty, it may be a chastisement—one meaning of punishment is, that the law exacts a penalty if it is broken—notice having been given that a certain amount of suffering would follow a certain course of action. All the laws of God, in the physical world, in the moral world, or in the political world, if broken, commonly entail a penalty. Revolutions beset a nation, shaking its very foundations, owing to some defects in the justice or wisdom of its government, and we cannot say that all this comes from the dust, or springs out of the ground. There are causes in the history of past events that will account for it. The philosophical historian of future years will show the results of some political mistake, continued perhaps for centuries, by the rulers of this nation. So in the moral and in the physical world there are laws, as it were, that execute themselves. If a man eat a deleterious herb, whether he does it willingly or unconsciously, the penalty will fall on his body. If a man touch the lightning-conductor, not knowing that the air is charged with electricity, no holiness on his part will prevent the deadly stroke. But there is another kind of law, written in the hearts of men, and given to the conscience, when the penalty is awarded as the result of moral transgression, and then it becomes a chastisement, and the language of Scripture then becomes the language of our hearts. It is the rod of God that hath done all this.

There is another thing that we must bear in mind, that there are certain evils which fall upon man, over which he can have no control. They come as the result of circumstances over which he has no power whatever. So, in the second book of Kings, the child of the Shunammite went out amongst the reapers; he was suddenly seized with a deadly pain in his head, was taken to his mother, sate upon her lap, and died at noon. A sunstroke had struck that child; but to say that from any fault of his he was selected as the object of suffering, when the rest of the

reapers were spared, would be as unjust as to say that those upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell were sinners above all the Galileans.

Moreover, to understand this we must recollect that the laws of God and the penalties of God are not miracles. If the penalty comes as the consequence appointed by God Himself, to follow certain sins, it is a natural punishment, but if it comes with no connection it is then an arbitrary punishment. So, if a man educates a child ill, and he turns out a bad man, there is a natural connection between the penalty and the guilt. But if a man, pursuing his journey, is struck with lightning, there is no penalty there. Now, in the Old Testament we find a natural punishment falling on Eli. He allowed his children to grow up without correction, and the contempt and scorn of the whole nation fell upon that family, and the father actually died in consequence of the shock of his children's misconduct. But if the father had died in battle, or by an accident, then it would have been unjust to say that there was any connection between his misconduct and his sudden death; it would have been an arbitrary connection. The punishments of God are generally not arbitrary: each law, as it were, inflicts its own penalty. It does not execute one that belongs to another. So, if the drunkard lead a life of intoxication, the consequence will be a trembling hand and a nerveless frame; but if he be drowned in the seas when sailing in the storm, he is punished for having broken a natural law, not a moral law of God. Let us then bear in mind that if the ship convey across the ocean the heavenly-minded missionary and the scoffing infidel, if the working of the vessel be attended to, and there is nothing unusual in the winds and the waves, they will convey the one to his destination as safely as the other.

Now, the application we would make of all this is, if a man perish when out on a Sabbath-day, we have no right to say that he dies because he has broken the Sabbath. If famine or pestilence visit the land, it may be explained by the infringement of some of God's natural laws; the earth

may not be rightly cultivated, sanitary means have not been taken to stop the pestilence; but we have no right to say that they come in consequence of political relations which are not to our mind, or of regulations of policy of which we disapprove.

There is one thing more. It is perfectly possible that transgressions against the natural laws of God may, in the end, become trespasses against His moral law, and then the penalty becomes chastisement. The first man that drank the fermented juice of the grape was perfectly innocent, even if it caused intoxication; but when he found how it affected his brain, it became sin to him thenceforward. The first time that a man enters into society which he finds hurtful to his religious feelings, he may have done it innocently; but when he sees how it lowers the tone of his character, he must mingle amongst them no more. So want of cleanliness in some Alpine regions may result from ignorance of the laws of nature; but when, in more crowded populations, it is ascertained that it is productive of disease, and injurious to those around them, then the infraction of the natural law is stigmatized as a higher degree of turpitude. That which was a penalty becomes something more of chastisement from the wrath of God. So it is that science goes on enlightening men more and more as to the laws of God's physical world, and telling them what they must, and what they must not do, in order to lessen the amount of bodily suffering around us.

My Christian brethren, we have spoken of these things at some length, because all these considerations have been brought into our view by that pestilence,[1] from which we celebrate our deliverance this day; partly the result of causes over which man has no control, and partly the result of the disregard of natural laws; partly, also, from the presence of moral evil amongst us. That these three distinct classes of causes have been present may be proved by tracing its

[1] The cholera.

history. They who have made it their duty to trace out its progress tell us that its origin was in 1818, in Bengal, when it arose during the overflow of the river Ganges; and then, dividing into two streams of pestilence and death, it passed through the world; one going to the east, the other to the west. The eastern current passed on till it reached the shores of China; the western moved slowly on with gigantic tread, decimating nations as it went, cutting off nine thousand of the British army; and, passing through Persia and Arabia, it destroyed twelve thousand of the pilgrims to Mecca, till it paused mysteriously and strangely on the very verge of Europe—as if the voice of God himself had said, "There is danger near; set thine house in order." By 1830 it had reached the metropolis of Russia. In 1831 it was doing its dreadful work in our own capital, while eighteen thousand fell in Paris alone; and it then passed on, as a winged messenger, across the ocean to America.

There was then a strange disappearance of the pestilence for four or five years, till 1837, when it appeared first in the southern parts of Europe, and gradually rolled its relentless course onward to our shores. In all this you will perceive something over which we have no control. It has pursued its way not guided by moral evil or by physical causes, but by some cause, explain it as you will—as electricity, or any other conjecture—it is one that baffles every effort to stay its progress. It has taken the same road, too, that it took on its former visitation. The common food of man seems changed into something poisonous; the very air is charged with contagion; everything proclaims it as a visitation from the Almighty. And in the very character of the disease there is something that marks it out from all other diseases: it has been truly said, that in its worst cases there is but one symptom, and that one is death. A man is full of health and strength, and in two hours he is gone. It is a disease which in its best form is terrific. That being who just now stood before you in perfect health, is in a moment a cold, livid, convulsed mass of humanity, fighting with the foe that threatens to overcome him.

But yet we find, in spite of all this, that in the progress of this strange disease, great mistakes have been made by man. From the circumstance of the poorer classes being the chief sufferers, they fancied that it was inflicted by the higher; and in some places they rose against them, accusing them of poisoning the wells. And we find Christians so mistaken, as to look on all this suffering, not as the natural connection between sin and its penalty, but as having some arbitrary connection with the sin of others, from which they themselves and their own party are free.

But in the next place we find that it really has been caused in some degree by the transgression of the laws of nature; for whatever may have been the secret origin of the disease, whatever may be the mystery of its onward course, still we know that there are certain conditions usually necessary to make it destructive. So we find that in India it was the natives who for the most part suffered, those whose constitutions had less stamina than our own. And here we see that debility produced by over-work, bad air, crowded dwellings, have been the predisposing causes; and this tells us, if ever visitation could speak, that affliction cometh not out of the dust, neither does sorrow spring from the ground. It has no direct connection with moral character, except on peculiar points. Place a worldly man and a holy man in the same unfavourable circumstances for receiving the disorder, and you will not find the one has any charm to escape the fate of the other.

But we do find that this disease is increased and propagated by human selfishness. We read of the crowds at Bethesda, of whom it was said, there was no man to put them into the water: and so it is now. The poor, the helpless, the neglected, have been the chief sufferers. Out of 243 who in this place have suffered from that and similar causes, 163 were receiving parish relief. And in this there is something that tells us not merely of ignorance, but of selfishness; for when commissioners went through the length and breadth of the country to examine into the statistics of the disease, we were met by the startling fact that medical

science, that careful nursing could do nothing while our crowded graveyards, our teeming and airless habitations, our worn-out and unhealthy population, received and propagated the miasma; and every time that a man in the higher classes perished, it was as if the poor neglected man had spoken from the grave; or, as if God himself had been heard to speak through him. He seems to say, "I can prove to you *now* my relationship. You can receive evil from me, if nothing else has ever passed between us;—the same constitution, the same flesh and blood, the same frame were once ours; and if I can do it in no other way, I can prove, by infecting you, that I am your brother still."

Once more: it has been produced in a degree by moral evil; vice has been as often the predisposing cause, as any other external circumstance, in certain cases. I say in certain cases, not in all. A man might have been a blasphemer, or a slanderer, but neither of these sins would affect him; but those sins which are connected with the flesh, sensuality, drunkenness, gradually pervade the human frame, and fit it for the reception of this disease.

II. But we will pass on to consider the history of this man's recovery, and of his gratitude. The first cause for gratitude was his selection. He alone was taken, and others were left. He had cause for gratitude, also, in that he had been taught the connection between moral evil and its penalty. He had been taught the certainty of God's laws, how they execute themselves, and, more blessed than all, he had been taught that there was a Personal Superintendence over all the children of men. The relief had come from the personal interposition of the Son of Man. He went and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had done this. And this explains to us the meaning and the necessity of a public acknowledgment of our gratitude. It is meant to show this nation that it is not by chance, nor by the operation of science, nor by the might of man that we have been rescued, but that our deliverance comes direct from God.

Let us observe the popular account (for John gives us the popular account) of the angel troubling the water. It

matters not whether it is scientifically to be proved or not, the secret causes lie hid beyond our investigation; but this you can observe, that it was a religious act, that it was not done by chance, that there were living agents in the healing process. The man of science in the present day would tell you what were the ingredients in the spring—how it told on the cellular tissue, or on the nervous fabric; but whatever he may make of it scientifically, it is true morally and religiously; for what is every remedy but the angel, the messenger of God sent down from the Father of all mercy, the Fountain of all goodness? So when we celebrate a day of national thanksgiving, it is but the nation's voice, arising in acknowledgment of a Parent's protection—that these things come not by chance, but that there is personal superintendence over this world, and this deliverance is the proof of a Father's love.

Once more: a day of thanksgiving is meant to be a warning and a reminder against future sins. "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." And it has ever been so, that the result of panic has been reaction. After excitement comes apathy; after terror has been produced, by danger especially, comes indifference, and therefore comes the warning voice from the Redeemer—"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

But we may perhaps say, "*My* sin did not produce this disease. It was no doing—no fault of mine; it came from causes beyond my control. The pestilence now has wreaked its vengeance; I find I had nothing to do with it, and I may dismiss the subject from my mind." My brethren, let us look into this a little more deeply. It was not directly your sin that nailed your Redeemer to the cross, but the sin of the cruel Pharisees, of the relentless multitude; yet it is said "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." It arises all from this circumstance, brethren—there are two worlds, a world of evil, and a world of good. The Son of Man came as the perfect and entire representation of the kingdom of holiness. He came in collision with the world of evil; He died for sinners—for the sins of others—

of all who partake of the nature of moral evil : and therefore by their sin they nailed the Redeemer to the cross. All those who opposed themselves to Jesus, would have opposed themselves to Moses, Zacharias, and Abel; they allowed the deeds of their fathers, and were partakers of the blood of all the prophets that had been slain upon the earth. The men who join in a crowd, aiding and abetting the death of any individual, by the law of every country are held guilty; and now, though there may have been no distinct act of selfishness by which any man has perished at your hands; though there have been no distinct want of care for the poor—still I may fearlessly ask you all, Christian brethren, does not your conscience tell you how little the welfare and the comfort of others has been in your thoughts? As far as we have taken a part in the world's selfishness; as far as we have lived for self and not for our neighbours; as far as we have forgotten the poor sufferers lying in the porches of Bethesda—not directly, but indirectly, all that has fallen upon this land may have been sent as a chastisement to us.

And there is this to be explained—"Sin no more;" meaning apparently, that if a man did not sin, nothing more would happen. Are we to understand then, that if a man has been blameless, he will never suffer from sorrow or sickness? or that if a man will avoid sin, he will never be visited by death? To have said that, would have been to contradict the history of the Redeemer's own life and death. He died, though He sinned not. How then, brethren, can we understand it? Why, we can but understand it in this way, by recalling to our memory what has been already said of the difference between the punishment and the penalty. If a man live a humble and holy life in Christ Jesus, there is no promise that if plague visits his land it shall not come nigh him. Live in purity, live in unselfishness; there is no promise that you shall not be cut down in a day; there is nothing in religion that can shield you from what the world calls trouble—from penalty; but there is this—that which would have been chastisement is changed into penalty.

The Redeemer suffered death as a penalty; but by no means as chastisement; on the contrary, it was the richest blessing which a Father's love could bestow upon His well-beloved Son, in whom He was well-pleased. So it will be with every one of us. He who lives to God, rests in his Redeemer's love, and is trying to get rid of his old nature—to him every sorrow, every bereavement, every pain, will come charged with blessings, and death itself will be no longer the king of terrors, but the messenger of grace, the very angel of God descending on the troubled waters, and calling him to his Father's home.

AN ELECTION SERMON

(UNFINISHED)

ACTS i. 23–26.—"And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.—And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,—That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.—And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

THIS is the account of the earliest appointment of an apostle or bishop over the Church of Christ.

It stands remarkably distinguished from the episcopal elections of after ages. Every one acquainted with Church history knows that the election of a bishop in the first centuries, and indeed for many ages, was one of the bitterest and fiercest questions which shook the Church of Christ.

* * * * *

[Appointment by the people. Presbyters. Various customs. Anecdote of Ambrose of Milan. Appointment by the Emperor or Bishop of Rome. Quarrel of ages between the Emperor and the Pope.]

Contradistinguished from this in spirit was the first appointment which ended in the selection of Matthias. Holy, calm, wise—presided over by an apostolic and Christian spirit.

It will be obvious at once why this subject has been selected. During the course of this week, England will be shaken to her centre with the selection of representatives who shall legislate for her hereafter, either in accordance with, or in defiance of, the principles of her constitution. In some places, as fiercely as the battle was formerly carried on between Guelph and Ghibelline, or between faction and faction in the choice of bishops, so fiercely will the contest rage in the choice of representatives.

Delicate and difficult as the introduction of such a subject from the pulpit must be, yet it seems to me the imperative duty of a minister of Christ—from which he cannot, except in cowardice, shrink—to endeavour to make clear the great Christian landmarks which belong to such an occurrence. But let me be understood. His duty is not to introduce politics in the common sense of the word, meaning thereby the views of some particular party. The pulpit is not to be degraded into the engine of a faction. Far, far above such questions, it ought to preserve the calm dignity of a voice which speaks for eternity, and not for time. If possible, not one word should drop by which a minister's own political leanings can be discovered.

Yet there must be broad principles of right and wrong in such a transaction as in any other. And, in discharge of my duty, I desire to place those before you.

I. The object of the election spoken of in my text.
II. The mode of the election.
III. The spirit in which it was conducted.

I. The object of the election. To elect a bishop of the universal Church.

It might be that in process of time the apostle so chosen should be appointed to a particular city—as St. James was

to Jerusalem. But it is plain his duty as an apostle was owed to the general assembly and Church of Christ, not to that particular city; and if he had allowed local partialities or local interests to stand before the interests of the whole, he would have neglected the duty of his high office.

Also, that if those who appointed him considered the interest of Jerusalem in the first instance, instead of his qualifications as a bishop of the Church universal, they would have failed in their duty.

In the third century, a bishop of Carthage, Cyprian, in a celebrated sentence has clearly and beautifully stated this principle—"*Episcopatus unus est, cujus*," &c. The Episcopate, one and indivisible, held in its entirety by each bishop, every part standing for the whole. That is, if he were a bishop of Carthage or Antioch, he was to remember that it was not the interests of Carthage over which he had to watch, but those of the Church of Christ; Carthage being his special allotment out of the whole. And in a council he was to give his voice not for that which might be good for the men of Carthage, but for the Church of Christ.

The application is plain.

The nation is one—its life is a sacred life.—The nation is the Christian people, for whom Christ shed His blood.—Its life is unity.—Its death is division.—The curse of a Christian is sectarianism.—The curse of a nation is faction.—Each legislator legislates for the country, not for a county or town.—Each elector holds his franchise as a sacred trust, to be exercised not for his town, or for a faction of his town, not for himself, or his friends, but for the general weal of the people of England.

Let me expose a common fallacy.

We are not to be biassed by asking what charity does a candidate support, nor what view does he take of some local question, nor whether he subscribe to tractarian or to evangelical societies. We are, in our high responsibility, selecting, not a president for a religious society, nor a patron

of a town, nor a subscriber to an hospital, but a legislator for England.

II. The mode of the election.

It was partly human, partly divine.

The human element is plain enough in that it was popular. The choice lay not with the apostles, but with the whole Church.—One hundred and twenty met in that upper chamber: all gave in their lots or votes. The Divine element lay in this, that it was over-ruled by God.

Here is the main point observable. They at least took for granted that the popular element was quite separate from the Divine. The selected one might be the chosen of the people, yet not the chosen of God. Hence they prayed, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen."

The common notion is, *vox populi vox Dei*. In other words, whatever the general voice wills is right. A law is right because it is a people's will. I do not say that we have got the full length of this idea in England. On the Continent it has long been prevalent. Possibly it is the expression of that Antichrist "who sheweth himself that he is God;" self-will setting itself up paramount to the will of God.

The *vox populi* is sometimes *vox Dei*, sometimes not. The voice of the people was the voice of God when the children of Israel rescued Jonathan from his father's unjust sentence (1 Sam. xiv. 45); and when the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal having been settled, they cried, "The Lord he is God."

Was the voice of the people the voice of God when, in Moses' absence, they required Aaron to make them a golden calf for a god? Or when, led on by the demagogue Demetrius, they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians"? Or when, at the instigation of the priests, led blindfold by them they cried, "Crucify Him"?

The politicians of this world eagerly debate the question, how best to secure a fair representation of the people's voice,

whether by individuals or by interests fairly balanced?—a question, doubtless, not to be put aside. But the Christian sees a question deeper far than these—not how to obtain most fairly an expression of the people's will, but how that will shall truly represent the will of God.

There is no other question, at last, than this.

And we shall attain this, not by nicely balancing interest against interest, much less by manœuvring, or by cunningly devised expedient, to defeat the cause which we believe the wrong one; but by each doing all that in him lies to rouse himself and others to a high sense of responsibility.

It is a noble thought, that of every elector going to vote, as these men did, for the Church, for the People, for God, and for the Right, earnestly anxious that he and others should do *right*.

Else—to speak humanly—this was an appeal to chance and not to God; and every election, by ballot or by suffrage, is else an appeal to chance.

All, therefore, depends upon the *spirit* in which the election is conducted.

What constitutes the difference between an appeal to God and an appeal to chance?

III. The Spirit.

1. A *religious* spirit. Ver. 24—"They prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen." Now, we shall be met here at once, by an objection. This was a religious work—the selection of an apostle; but the choice of a representative is not a religious work, only a secular one.

Here we come, therefore, to the very pith and marrow of the whole question. The distinction between religious and secular is true in a sense, but, as we make it, it is false. It is not the occupation, but, the spirit which makes the difference. The election of a bishop may be a most secular thing. The election of a representative may be a religious thing. St. Paul taught that nothing is profane. Sanctified

by the Word of God and prayer, St. Peter learned that nothing is common or unclean.

[Many relics remain to us from our religious forefathers indicative of this truth. Grace before meals. *Dei gratiâ* on coins of the realm. "In the name of God," at the commencement of wills. Oath in court of justice. Prayers in universities before election of scholars.—All proclaim that the simplest acts of our domestic and political life are sacred or profane according to the spirit in which they are performed; not in the question whether they are done for the State or the Church, but whether with God or without God.]

Observe—It is not the preluding such an election with public prayer that would make it a religious act. It is religious so far as each man discharges his part as a duty and solemn responsibility.

If looked on in this spirit by the higher classes, would the debauchery and the drunkenness which are fostered by rich men of all parties among the poor for their own purposes, be possible? Would they, for the sake of one vote, or a hundred votes, brutalize their fellow-creatures?

2. It is implied in this, that it must be done *conscientiously*.

Each Christian found himself in possession of a new right—that of giving a vote or casting a lot.

Like all rights, it was a duty. He had not a right to do what he liked. His right was only the duty of doing right. And if any one had swayed him to support the cause of Barsabas or that of Matthias on any motives except this one—"You ought"—he had so far injured his conscience.

The conscience of man is a holy, sacred thing. The worst of crimes is to injure a human conscience. Better kill the body. Remember how strongly St. Paul speaks, "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." And that sin,

remember, consisted in leading them to do a thing which, though right in itself, they thought wrong.

Now, there is an offence against the laws of the State which all men agree in treating with a smile.

My brethren, bribery is a *sin*—a sin against God. Not because a particular law has been made against it, but because it lowers the sense of personal responsibility, blunts the conscience, dethrones the God within the man's soul, and erects selfishness, and greed, and interest, in His stead. And whether you do it directly or indirectly—directly by giving, indirectly by withdrawing assistance, or patronage—you sin against Christ.

3. It was not done from personal interest.

There were two candidates, Barsabas and Matthias. Now, if the supporters of these two had been influenced chiefly by such considerations as blood-relationship, or the chance of favour and promotion, manifestly a high function would have been degraded.

In secular matters, however, we do not judge so. A man generally decides according to his professional or his personal interests. You know almost to a certainty beforehand which way a man will vote, if you know his profession. If a man be a farmer, or a clergyman, or a merchant, you can pretty surely guess on which side he will range himself.

Partly, no doubt, this is involuntary—the result of those prejudices which attach to us all from association. But it is partly voluntary. We *know* that we are thinking not of the general good, but of our own interests. And thus a farmer would think himself justified in looking at a question simply as it affected his class, and a noble as it affected his caste, and a working-man as it bore upon the working-classes.

Brethren, we are Christians. Something of a principle higher than this ought to be ours. What is the law of the Cross of Christ? The sacrifice of the One for the whole, the cheerful surrender of the few for the many. Else, what do we more than others?

These are fine words—patriotism, public principle, purity.

Be sure these words are but sentimental, except as they spring out of the Cross of Christ.

Application.—

I have endeavoured to keep entirely unseen my own political views. I may have failed, but not voluntarily.

Remember, in conclusion, the matter of paramount importance to be decided this week is, not whether a preponderance shall be ensured for one of the great parties which divide the country, or the other. That is important, but it is secondary. The important thing to be devoutly wished, is that each man shall give his vote as these men did—conscientiously, religiously, unselfishly, lovingly.

Better that he should support the wrong cause conscientiously than the right one insincerely. Better be a true man on the side of wrong than a false man on the side of right.

THE HUMANE SOCIETY

(*A Sermon preached on its Behalf*)

MARK v. 35-43.—"While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?—As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.—And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.—And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.—And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.—And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.—And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.—And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.—And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat."

I PLEAD to-day for a society whose cause has not been advocated in this chapel for many years. It is now exactly ten years since a collection was made in Trinity Chapel for the Humane Society.

Its general objects, as everybody knows, are the preservation of the life of drowning persons, by precautions previously taken, and by subsequent remedies. But this vague statement being insufficient to awaken the interest which the Society deserves, I propose to consider it in its details, and to view these—as in the pulpit we are bound to do—from the peculiar Christian point of view.

It is remarkable that there is a Scripture passage which, point by point, offers a parallel to the work of this Society, and a special sanction and a precedent, both for its peculiar work and the spirit in which it is to be done. I shall consider—

I. This particular form of the Redeemer's work.
II. The spirit of the Redeemer's work.

I. We find among the many forms of His work—

1. Restoration from a special form of death—I cannot class this case with that of Lazarus.

The narrative seems to distinguish this from the other miracle. Christ says, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." Hence this particular case was one of restoration from apparent death. The other case was that of restoration from real death.

Here then is our first point of resemblance.

Before this Society was formed, persons apparently suffocated were left to perish. Myriads, doubtless, have died who might have been saved. But the idea of restoration was as far from them as from the friends of Jairus. They would have laughed the proposer "to scorn." But, Christ-like, this Society came into the world with a strange message—revealed by science, but vitalized by love—a Christ-like message: "Be not afraid; he is not dead, but sleepeth."

Now the sphere of the Society's operations is thus defined: —"To preserve from premature death persons apparently dead from either drowning, hanging, lightning, cold, heat, noxious vapours, apoplexy, or intoxication." They are, consequently, large, taking cognizance not merely of cases of drowning only, but all of the same generic character—suspended animation, apparent death, asphyxia.

[Causes—foul air, in drains and brewers' vats, accidental hanging, mines, cellars, wells.]

In England their causes are more peculiarly extensive, because of our sea-girt shores, and because of the variable climate, which to-day leaves the ice firm, and to-morrow has made it rotten and unsafe.

2. Here was the recognition of the value of life. The force of the whole petition lay in one single consideration—"she shall live."

It has been often said that Christianity has enhanced the value of life, and our charitable societies are alleged in evidence; our hospitals; the increased average of human life, which has been the result of sanitary regulations and improvements in medical treatment. But this statement needs some qualification.

The value attached to life by the ancient Egyptian was quite as great as that attributed to it by the modern Englishman. When Abraham went into Egypt he found a people whose feeling of the sacredness of life was so great that they saw God wherever life was; and venerated the bull, and the fish, and the crocodile. To slay one of them was like murder.

And again: it could not be said that we owe to Christianity the recognition of the honour due to one who saves life. The most honourable of crowns was that presented to one who had saved the life of a Roman citizen.

Nay more: instead of peculiarly exalting the value of life, there is a sense in which Christianity depreciates it. "If a man hate not his own life he cannot be my disciple." The Son of Man came to be a sacrifice; and it is the peculiar dignity of the Christian that he has a life to *give*.

Therefore we must distinguish.

It is not mere life on which Christianity has shed a richer value. It is by ennobling the purpose to which life is to be dedicated that it has made life more precious. A crowded metropolis, looked at merely as a mass of living beings, is no more dignified, and far more disgusting, than an ant-hill with its innumerable creeping lives. Looked on as a place in which each individual is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and every pang and joy of whom has in it something of infinitude, it becomes almost priceless in its value.

And again: Christianity differs from heathenism in this, that it has declared the dignity of the life of man—not merely that of certain classes. It has not "saved citizens," but saved *men*.

[Consider the worth of a single soul.]

Hence this is appropriately called the *Humane* Society, that word originally meaning human. It is no Brahminical association, abstaining from shedding animal blood and living on no animal food, but it recognizes the worth of a life in which God moves, and which Christ has redeemed.

It is human life, not animal, that it cares for. The life of man as man, not of some peculiar class of men.

3. We consider the Saviour's direction respecting the means of effecting complete recovery. He "commanded that something should be given her to eat."

Observe His reverential submission to the laws of nature. He did not suspend those laws. It did not seem to Him that where law was, God was not; or that the proof of God's agency was to be found only in the abrogation of law. He recognized the sanctity of those laws which make certain remedies and certain treatment indispensable to health

[Sanitary regulations are as religious as a miracle.]

And in doing this He furnished a precedent singularly close for the operations of this Society. It is one great part of the object of its existence to spread a knowledge of the right methods of treatment in case of suspended animation. It has compiled and published rules for the treatment of the drowned, the apparently suffocated, and those struck by sudden apoplexy.

And consider the indirect results of this, as well as the direct.

Such cases occur unexpectedly. No medical aid is near. Friends are alarmed. Presence of mind is lost. The vulgar means resorted to from superstition and ignorance are almost incredible. But gradually the knowledge is spread through the country of what to do in cases of emergency. Many here would be prepared to act if a need arose. I have been present at such a case, and have seen life saved by arresting the rough treatment of ignorance acting traditionally. But in that and most cases, the knowledge had been gained from the publications of this Society.

An immense step is gained by the systematic direction of attention to these matters. Every one ought to know what to do on a sudden emergency, a case of strangulation, of suffocation, of apoplexy; and yet, this forming no definite part of the general plan of education, there are comparatively few who have the least idea what should be done before medical aid can be obtained. Probably, thousands would be helpless as a child, and human life would be sacrificed.

II. We consider the spirit of the Redeemer's work.

1. It was Love.

It was not reward—not even the reward of applause—which was the spring of beneficence in the Son of Man. He desired that it should be unknown. He did good because it was good. He relieved because it was the expression of His own exuberant loving-kindness.

2. It was a spirit of retiring modesty.

He did not wish that it should be known. But His disciples have made it known to the world.

Now observe first, the evidence here afforded of His real Humanity. Why did Christ wish to conceal, and the apostles wish to publish abroad His miracles? Take the simple view, and all is plain. Christ, the *man*, with unaffected modesty, shrank from publicity and applause. The Apostles, with genuine human admiration, record the deed. But seek for some deeper and more mysterious reason, and at once the whole becomes a pantomime, an unreal transaction acted on this world's stage for effect, as though we should say that He was wishing to have it known, but for certain reasons He made as if He wished it to be concealed. Here, as usual, the simple is the sublime and true.

Observe, however, secondly:—

That publication by the apostles sanctions and explains another part of this Society's operations. Its office is to observe, to record, and to reward acts of self-devotion. Certain scales of reward are given to one who risks his life

to save life, to the surgeon whose skill restores life, to the publican who opens his house to receive the apparently dead body. And every year lists of names are published of those who have been thus distinguished by their humanity. The eyes of the Society are over all England, and no heroic act can pass unnoticed or unhonoured by them.

Now distinctly understand on what principle this is done. It is an apostolic office. It is precisely the principle on which the apostles were appointed by God to record the acts and life of Christ. Was this for Christ's sake? Nay, it was for the world's good. That Sacrifice of Christ recorded, pronounced Divine, has been the spring and life of innumerable sacrifices and unknown self-devotion.

And so the rewards given by this Society are not given as recompense. Think you that a medal can pay self-devotion? or a few pounds liquidate the debt due to generosity? or even, that the thought of the reward would lead a man to plunge into the water to save life, who would not have plunged in without any hope of reward? No!—But it is good for the world to hear of what is generous and good. It is good to appropriate rewards to such acts, in order to set the standard. It is right that, in a country where enormous subscriptions are collected, and monuments are erected to men who have made fortunes by speculation, there should be some visible, tangible recognition of the worth and value of more generous deeds.

The medal over the fire-place of the poor fisherman is to him a *title;* and, truer than most titles, it tells what has been *done*. It descends an heirloom to the family, saying to the children, Be brave, self-sacrificing, as your father was.

3. It was a spirit of perseverance.

They laughed Him to scorn, yet He persisted. Slow calm perseverance amidst ridicule.

In the progress of this Society we find again a parallel. When the idea of resuscitation was first promulgated, it was met with incredulity and ridicule. Even in 1773, when Dr. Hawes laid the first foundation of the Humane Society, it was with difficulty he could overcome the prejudice which

existed against the idea, and he had to bear the whole cost of demonstrating the practicability of his theory. For one whole year he paid all the rewards and expenses himself, and then, attracted by the self-sacrificing ardour with which he had given himself up to the idea of rescuing human life, thirty-two gentlemen, his own and Dr. Cogan's friends, united together in furtherance of this benevolent design, and thus laid the foundation of the Humane Society.

Here note the attractive power of self-denying work: the Redeemer's Life and Death has been the living power of the world's work, of the world's life.

MAN'S GREATNESS AND GOD'S GREATNESS

ISAIAH lvii. 15.—"For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy. I dwell in the high and holy place—with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

THE origin of this announcement seems to have been the state of contempt in which religion found itself in the days of Isaiah. One of the most profligate monarchs that ever disgraced the page of sacred history, sat upon the throne of Judah. His court was filled with men who recommended themselves chiefly by their licentiousness. The altar was forsaken. Sacrilegious hands had placed the abominations of heathenism in the Holy Place; and Piety, banished from the State, the Church, and the Royal court, was once more as she had been before, and will be again, a wanderer on the face of the earth. Now, however easy it may be to contemplate such a state of things at a distance, it never takes place in a man's own day and time without suggesting painful perplexities of a twofold nature. In the first place suspicions respecting

God's character; and, in the second place, misgivings as to his own duty. For a faithless heart whispers, Is it worth while to suffer for a sinking cause? Honour, preferment, grandeur, follow in the train of unscrupulous conduct. To be strict in goodness, is to be pointed at and shunned. To be no better than one's neighbours is the only way of being at peace. It seems to have been to such a state as this that Isaiah was commissioned to bring light. He vindicated God's character by saying that He is "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity." He encouraged those who were trodden down to perseverance, by reminding them that real dignity is something very different from present success. God dwells with him, "that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

I. That in which the greatness of God consists.
II. That in which man's greatness consists.

The first measurement, so to speak, which is given us of God's greatness, is in respect of Time. He inhabiteth Eternity. There are some subjects on which it would be good to dwell, if it were only for the sake of that enlargement of mind which is produced by their contemplation. And eternity is one of these, so that you cannot steadily fix the thoughts upon it without being sensible of a peculiar kind of elevation, at the same time that you are humbled by a personal feeling of utter insignificance. You have come in contact with something so immeasurable—beyond the narrow range of our common speculations—that you are exalted by the very conception of it. Now the only way we have of forming any idea of eternity is by going, step by step, up to the largest measures of time we know of, and so ascending, on and on, till we are lost in wonder. We cannot grasp eternity, but we can learn something of it by perceiving, that, rise to what portion of time we will, eternity is vaster than the vastest. We take up, for instance, the history of our own country, and then, when we have spent months in mastering the mere outline of

those great events which, in the slow course of revolving centuries, have made England what she is, her earlier ages seem so far removed from our own times, that they appear to belong to a hoary and most remote antiquity. But then, when you compare those times with even the existing works of man, and when you remember that, when England was yet young in civilization, the pyramids of Egypt were already grey with 1500 years, you have got another step which impresses you with a doubled amount of vastness. Double that period, and you come to the far distant moment when the present aspect of this world was called by creation out of the formless void in which it was before.

Modern science has raised us to a pinnacle of thought beyond even this. It has commanded us to think of countless ages in which that formless void existed before it put on the aspect of its present creation. Millions of years before God called the light day, and the darkness night, there was, if science speaks true, creation after creation called into existence, and buried in its own ruins upon the surface of this earth. And then, there was a time beyond even this—there was a moment when this earth itself, with all its countless creations and innumerable ages, did not exist. And, again, in that far back distance it is more than conceivable, it seems by the analogy of God's dealings next to certain, that ten thousand worlds may have been called into existence, and lasted their unnumbered ages, and then perished in succession. Compared with these stupendous figures, 6000 years of *our* planet sink into nothingness. The mind is lost in dwelling on such thoughts as these. When you have penetrated far, far back, by successive approximations, and still see the illimitable distance receding before you as distant as before, imagination absolutely gives way, and you feel dizzy and bewildered with new strange thoughts, that have not a name. But this is only one aspect of the case. It looks only to time past. The same overpowering calculations wait us when we bend our eyes on that which is to come. Time

stretches back immeasurably, but it also stretches on and on for ever. Now it is by such a conception as this that the inspired prophet attempts to measure the immeasurable of God. All that eternity, magnificent as it is, never was without an Inhabitant. Eternity means nothing by itself. It merely expresses the existence of the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth it. We make a fanciful distinction between eternity and time—there is no real distinction. We are in eternity at this moment. That has begun to be with us which never began with God. Our only measure of time is by the succession of ideas. If ideas flow fast, and many sights and many thoughts pass by us, time seems lengthened. If we have the simple routine of a few engagements, the same every day, with little variety, the years roll by us so fast that we cannot mark them. It is not so with God. There is no succession of ideas with Him. Every possible idea is present with Him now. It was present with Him ten thousand years ago. God's dwelling-place is that eternity which has neither past nor future, but one vast, immeasurable present.

There is a second measure given us of God in this verse. It is in respect of Space. He dwelleth in the High and Lofty place. He dwelleth, moreover, in the most insignificant place—even the heart of man. And the idea by which the prophet would here exhibit to us the greatness of God is that of His eternal Omnipresence. It is difficult to say which conception carries with it the greatest exaltation—that of boundless space, or that of unbounded time. When we pass from the tame and narrow scenery of our own country, and stand on those spots of earth in which nature puts on her wilder and more awful forms, we are conscious of something of the grandeur which belongs to the thought of space. Go where the strong foundations of the earth lie around you in their massive majesty, and mountain after mountain rears its snow to heaven in a giant chain, and then, when this bursts upon you for the first time in life, there is that peculiar feeling which we call, in common language, an enlargement of ideas. But when we are told

that the sublimity of those dizzy heights is but a nameless speck in comparison with the globe of which they form the girdle; and when we pass on to think of that globe itself as a minute spot in the mighty system to which it belongs, so that our world might be annihilated, and its loss would not be felt; and when we are told that eighty million of such systems roll in the world of space, to which our own system again is as nothing; and when we again are pressed with the recollection that beyond those furthest limits creative power is exerted immeasurably further than eye can reach, or thought can penetrate; then, brethren, the awe which comes upon the heart is only, after all, a tribute to a *portion* of God's greatness. Yet we need not science to teach us this. It is the thought which oppresses very childhood—the overpowering thought of space. A child can put his head upon his hands, and think and think till it reaches in imagination some far distant barrier of the universe, and still the difficulty presents itself to his young mind, "And what is beyond that barrier?" and the only answer is "The high and lofty place." And this, brethren, is the inward seal with which God has stamped Himself upon man's heart. If every other trace of Deity has been expunged by the fall, these two at least defy destruction—the thought of Eternal Time, and the thought of Immeasurable Space.

The third measure which is given us of God respects His character. His name is Holy. The chief idea which this would convey to us is separation from evil. Brethren, there is perhaps a time drawing near when those of us who shall stand at His right hand, purified from all evil taint, shall be able to comprehend absolutely what is meant by the Holiness of God. At present, with hearts cleaving down to earth, and tossed by a thousand gusts of unholy passion, we can only form a dim conception *relatively* of that which it implies. None but the pure can understand purity. The chief knowledge which we have of God's holiness comes from our acquaintance with unholiness. We know what

impurity is—God is *not* that. We know what injustice is —God is *not* that. We know what restlessness, and guilt, and passion are, and deceitfulness, and pride, and waywardness—all these we know. God is none of these. And this is our chief acquaintance with His character. We know what God is *not*. We scarcely can be rightly said to know, that is to feel, what God *is*. And, therefore, this is implied in the very name of holiness. Holiness in the Jewish sense means simply separateness. From all that is wrong, and mean, and base, our God is for ever separate.

There is another way in which God gives to us a conception of what this holiness implies. Tell us of His justice, His truth, His loving-kindness. All these are cold abstractions. They convey no distinct idea of themselves to our hearts. What we wanted was, that these should be exhibited to us in tangible reality. And it is just this which God has done. He has exhibited all these attributes, not in the light of *speculation*, but in the light of *facts*. He has given us His own character in all its delicacy of colouring in the history of Christ. Love, Mercy, Tenderness, Purity—these are no mere names when we see them brought out in the human actions of our Master. Holiness is only a shadow to our minds, till it receives shape and substance in the life of Christ. All this character of holiness is intelligible to us in Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten of the Father He hath declared Him."

There is a third light in which God's holiness is shown to us, and that is in the sternness with which He recoils from guilt. When Christ died for man, I know what God's love means ; and when Jesus wept human tears over Jerusalem, I know what God's compassion means ; and when the stern denunciations of Jesus rung in the Pharisees' ears, I can comprehend what God's indignation is ; and when Jesus stood calm before His murderers, I have a conception of what serenity is. Brethren, revelation opens to us a scene beyond the grave, when this shall be exhibited in full operation. There will be an everlasting banishment from

God's presence of that impurity on which the last efforts have been tried in vain. It will be a carrying out of this sentence by a law that cannot be reversed—"Depart from me, ye cursed." But it is quite a mistake to suppose that this is only a matter of revelation. Traces of it we have now on this side the sepulchre. Human life is full of God's recoil from sin. In the writhings of a heart which has been made to possess its own iniquities—in the dark spot which guilt leaves upon the conscience, rising up at times in a man's gayest moments, as if it will not come out—in the restlessness and the feverishness which follow the efforts of the man who has indulged habits of sin too long,—in all these there is a law repelling wickedness from the presence of the Most High,—which proclaims that God is holy.

And now, brethren, it is in these that the greatness of God consists—Eternal in Time—Unlimited in Space—Unchangeable—Pure in character—His serenity and His vastness arise from His own perfections.

We are to consider, in the second place, the greatness of man.

1. The nature of that greatness.
2. The persons who are great.

Now, this is brought before us in the text in this one fact, that man has been made a habitation of the Deity—"I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." There is in the very outset this distinction between what is great in God and what is great in man. To be independent of everything in the universe is God's glory, and to be independent is man's shame. All that God has, He has from Himself—all that man has, he has from God. And the moment man cuts himself off from God, that moment he cuts himself off from grandeur.

There are two things implied in Scripture, when it is said that God dwells with man. The first is that peculiar presence which He has conferred upon the members of His church. Brethren, we presume not to define what that Presence is,

and how it dwells within us—we are content to leave it as a mystery. But this we know, that something of a very peculiar and supernatural character takes place in the heart of every man upon whom the gospel has been brought to bear with power. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that your bodies are the temples, &c." And again in the Epistle to the Ephesians—"In Christ ye are builded for an habitation of God, &c." There is something in these expressions which refuses to be explained away. They leave us but one conclusion, and that is—that in all those who have become Christ's by faith, God personally and locally has taken up His dwelling-place.

There is a second meaning attached in Scripture to the expression God dwells in man. According to the first meaning, we understand it in the most plain and literal sense the words are capable of conveying. According to the second, we understand His dwelling in a figurative sense, implying this—that He gives an acquaintance with Himself to man. So, for instance, when Judas asked, "Lord, how is it, that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not to the world?" Our Redeemer's reply was this—"If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." In the question it was asked *how* God would manifest Himself to His servants. In the answer it was shown *how* He would make His abode with them. And if the answer be any reply to the question at all, what follows is this—that God making His abode or dwelling in the heart is the same thing exactly as God's manifesting Himself to the heart. Brethren, in these two things the greatness of man consists. One is to have God so dwelling in us as to impart His character to us; and the other is to have God so dwelling in us that we recognize His presence, and know that we are His and He is ours. They are two things perfectly distinct. To *have* God in us, this is salvation; to *know* that God is in us, this is assurance.

Lastly, we inquire as to the persons who are truly great.

And these the Holy Scripture has divided into two classes—those who are humble and those who are contrite in heart. Or rather, it will be observed that it is the same class of character under different circumstances. Humbleness is the frame of mind of those who are in a state of innocence, contrition of those who are in a state of repentant guilt. Brethren, let not the expression innocence be misunderstood. Innocence in its true and highest sense never existed but once upon this earth. Innocence cannot be the religion of man now. But yet there are those who have walked with God from youth, not quenching the spirit which He gave them, and who are therefore *comparatively* innocent beings. All they have to do is to go on, whereas the guilty man has to stop and turn back before he can go on. Repentance with them is the gentle work of every day, not the work of one distinct and miserable part of life. They are those whom the Lord calls just men which need no repentance, and of whom He says, "He that is clean needeth not save to wash his feet."

Now they are described here as the humble in heart. Two things are required for this state of mind. One is that a man should have a true estimate of God, and the other is that he should have a true estimate of himself.

Vain, blind man places himself on a little corner of this planet, a speck upon a speck of the universe, and begins to form conclusions from the small fraction of God's government which he can see from thence. The astronomer looks at the laws of motion and forgets that there must have been a First Cause to commence that motion. The surgeon looks at the materialism of his own frame and forgets that matter cannot organise itself into exquisite beauty. The metaphysician buries himself in the laws of mind and forgets that there may be spiritual influences producing all those laws. And this, brethren, is the unhumbled spirit of philosophy—intellectual pride. Men look at Nature, but they do not look through it up to Nature's God. There is awful ignorance of God, producing an unhumbled heart, which arisies from indulged sin. God may be shut

out from the soul by pride of intellect, or by pride of heart.

Pharaoh is placed before us in Scripture almost as a type of pride. His pride arose from ignorance of God. "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." And this was not intellectual pride; it was pride in a matter of duty. Pharaoh had been immersing his whole heart in the narrow politics of Egypt. The great problem of his day was to aggrandize his own people and prevent an insurrection of the Israelites; and that small kingdom of Egypt had been his universe. He shut his heart to the voice of justice and the voice of humanity; in other words, great in the pride of human majesty, small in the sight of the High and Lofty One, he shut himself out from the knowledge of God.

The next ingredient of humbleness is, that a man must have a right estimate of himself. There is a vast amount of self-deception on this point. We say of ourselves that which we could not bear others to say of us. A man truly humbled would take it only as his due when others treated him in the way that he says that he deserves. But, my brethren, we kneel in our closets in shame for what we are, and we tell our God that the lowest place is too good for us; and then we go into the world, and if we meet with slight or disrespect, or if our opinion be not attended to, or if another be preferred before us, there is all the anguish of a galled and jealous spirit, and half the bitterness of our lives comes from this, that we are smarting from what we call the wrongs and the neglect of men. My beloved brethren, if we saw ourselves as God sees us, we should be willing to be anywhere, to be silent when others speak, to be passed by in the world's crowd, and thrust aside to make way for others. We should be willing to put others in the way of doing that which we might have got reputation for by doing ourselves. This was the temper of our Master—this is the meek and the quiet spirit, and this is the temper of the humble with whom the High and Lofty One dwells.

The other class of those who are truly great are the

contrite in spirit. At first sight it might be supposed that there must ever be a vast distinction between the innocent and the penitent. It was so that the elder son in the parable thought when he saw his brother restored to his father's favour. He was surprised and hurt. He had served his father these many years—his brother had wasted his substance in riotous living. But in this passage God makes no distinction. He places the humble consistent follower and the broken-hearted sinner on a level. He dwells with both, with him that is contrite, *and* with him that is humble. He sheds around them both the grandeur of His own presence, and the annals of Church history are full of exemplifications of this marvel of God's grace. By the transforming grace of Christ men, who have done the very work of Satan, have become as conspicuous in the service of heaven as they were once conspicuous in the career of guilt. So indisputably has this been so, that men have drawn from such instances the perverted conclusion, that if a man is ever to be a great saint, he must first be a great sinner. God forbid, brethren, that we should ever make such an inference. But this we infer for our own encouragement, that past sin does not necessarily preclude from high attainments. We must "forget the things that are behind." We must not mourn over past years of folly as if they made saintliness impossible. Deep as we may have been once in earthliness, so deep we may also be in penitence, and so high we may become in spirituality. We have so many years the fewer to do our work in. Well, brethren, let us try to do it so much the faster. Christ can crowd the work of years into hours. He did it with the dying thief. If the man who has set out early may take his time, it certainly cannot be so with *us* who have lost our time. If we have lost God's bright and happy presence by our wilfulness, what then? Unrelieved sadness? Nay, brethren, calmness, purity, may have gone from our heart; but *all* is not gone yet. Just as sweetness comes from the bark of the cinnamon when it is bruised, so can the spirit of the Cross of Christ bring beauty and holiness and peace out of the

bruised and broken heart. God dwells with the contrite as much as with the humble.

And now, brethren, to conclude, the first inference we collect from this subject, is the danger of coming into collision with such a God as our God. Day by day we commit sins of thought and word of which the dull eye of man takes no cognizance. He whose name is Holy cannot pass them by. I may elude the vigilance of a human enemy and place myself beyond his reach. God fills all space—there is not a spot in which His piercing eye is not on us, and His uplifted hand cannot find us out. Man must strike soon if he would strike at all; for opportunities pass away from him, and his victim may escape his vengeance by his death. There is no passing of opportunity with God, and it is this which makes His long suffering a solemn thing. God can wait, for He has a whole eternity before Him in which He may strike. "All things are open, and naked to Him with whom we have to do."

In the next place we are taught the heavenly character of condescension. It is not from the insignificance of man that God's dwelling with him is so strange. It is as much the glory of God to bend His attention on an atom as to uphold the universe. But the marvel is that the habitation which He has chosen for Himself is an impure one. And when He came down from His magnificence to make this world His home, still the same character of condescension was shown through all the life of Christ. Our God selected the society of the outcasts of earth, those whom none else would speak to. Brethren, if we would be Godlike, we must follow in the same steps. Our temptation is to do exactly the reverse. We are for ever wishing to obtain the friendship and the intimacy of those above us in the world. To win over men of influence to truth—to associate with men of talent and station, and title. This is the world-chase, and this, brethren, is too much the religious man's chase. But if you look simply to the question of resemblance to God, then the man who makes it a habit to select that one in life to do good to, and that one in a room to speak with, whom others

pass by because there is nothing either of intellect, or power, or name, to recommend him, but only humbleness, *that* man has stamped upon his heart more of heavenly similitude by condescension, than the man who has made it his business to win this world's great ones, even for the sake of truth.

Lastly, we learn the guilt of two things of which this world is full—vanity and pride. There is a distinction between these two. But the distinction consists in this, that the vain man looks for the admiration of others—the proud man requires nothing but his own. Now, it is this distinction which makes vanity despicable to us all. We can easily find out the vain man—we soon discover what it is he wants to be observed, whether it be a gift of person, or a gift of mind, or a gift of character. If he be vain of his person, his attitudes will tell the tale. If he be vain of his judgment, or his memory, or his honesty, he cannot help an unnecessary parade. The world finds him out, and this is why vanity is ever looked on with contempt. So soon as we let men see that we are suppliants for their admiration, we are at their mercy. We have given them the privilege of feeling that they are above us. We have invited them to spurn us. And therefore vanity is but a thing for scorn. But it is very different with pride. No man can look down on him that is proud, for he has asked no man for anything. They are forced to feel respect for pride, because it is thoroughly independent of them. It wraps itself up in the consequence of its own excellences, and scorns to care whether others take note of them or not. It is just here that the danger lies. We have exalted a sin into a virtue. No man will acknowledge that he is vain, but almost any man will acknowledge that he is proud. But tried by the balance of the sanctuary, there is little to choose between the two. If a man look for greatness out of God, it matters little whether he seek it in his own applause, or in the applause of others. The *proud* Pharisee, who trusted in himself that he was righteous, was condemned by Christ as severely, and even more, than the *vain* Jews who "could not believe because they sought honour from one another, and not that honour which

cometh from God only." It may be a more dazzling, and a more splendid sin to be proud. It is not less hateful in God's sight. Let us speak God's word to our own unquiet, swelling, burning hearts. Pride may disguise itself as it will in its own majesty, but in the presence of the High and Lofty One, it is but littleness after all.

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